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## Erosion and Adjustment: A Bourdieuan-Inspired Analysis of Imprisonment and Release

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Erosion and Adjustment: A Bourdieuan-Inspired Analysis of Imprisonment and Release

by  
Joshua David Seim

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Science  
In  
Sociology

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Portland State University  
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## ABSTRACT

Sociologists of punishment generally agree that the American prison exacerbates social inequality, but the mechanisms by which it does so remain somewhat fuzzy. This thesis pulls from the tradition of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), a canonical theorist of power and inequality, and specifically his three “thinking tools” of field, capital, and habitus, to unveil these mechanisms. Empirically, I turn to ethnographic data I collected in a minimum-security men’s prison that is generally reserved for convicts who will be released to one of the three most populated counties in Oregon. I explore how soon-to-be-released prisoners (i.e., prisoners who will be released within six months) understand and prepare for their exit. Data suggest most prisoners approaching release want to adopt an honest working class style of living, and that many take proactive steps they perceive as likely to increase their chances of accessing this lifestyle (sometimes called the “straight life”). However, I argue that any (re)integrative potential emerging from these conscious and interest-oriented strategies are at risk of being trumped by two processes I title “capital erosion” and “habitus adjustment.” I frame these as unintended, but nevertheless strong, consequences of imprisonment. Ultimately, I suggest imprisonment worsens existing patterns of inequality by means of draining power from the nearly powerless and disintegrating the poorly integrated.

## Dedication

For my beautiful wife, Brenna, whose love and support keep me going

## Acknowledgements

There are numerous people who have in some way or another influenced this project. I must certainly thank the men at Columbia River who have given me their time for interviews and who have welcomed me into their world for observations. I am also indebted to the Oregon Department of Corrections Research and Evaluation Unit for their willingness to open the gates at CRCI for a young prison ethnographer. To date this thesis is my proudest accomplishment and it is so due to the guidance, support, and constructive criticism from the following individuals: Melissa Thompson, Pete Collier, Randy Blazak, Jody Sundt, Stephanie Gaidosh, Margaret Braun, Scott Westman, Liz Borders, Katy Griffin, Jose Padin, Daniel Sullivan, Bob Liebman, Loïc Wacquant, Vikas Gumbhir, Bill Hayes, Geoff Glenn, Dave Seim, Pamela Seim, and Brenna Wiley.

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## Preface

This is a disclaimer. The subsequent pages outline a strident claim that prisons generally worsen existing patterns of inequality in America. It is necessary for me first to clearly state that I am not attacking correctional workers (or administrations) as lurid actors seeking and executing intentional plans to polarize inequality. A conversation on the intersection of stratification and state practices of punishment is a complicated one that cannot be reasonably reduced to a blame game. Administrations and employees of the prison are generally passive to the class and color of those who are selected for the penitentiary, and in many ways they are restricted in their abilities to choose between “corrections” and “warehousing.” Other sectors of the state are at play, such as police, courts, and legislators. It is also important to remember that the profile of the prisoner is partly dependent on the electorate, and thus subsequently the beliefs, values, and opinions of those completing ballots. Snowballing this, it becomes clear that other institutions, such as those who dissect and produce information (e.g., academe, mass media, and various branches of state) and socialize the murky definitions of what it means to be and act as an “American” (law-abiding or not) also influence imprisonment and release practices. This thesis is simply an inquiry into one element among a complex order of U.S. punishment.

More importantly, this thesis should not be read as an attack on, or even a minor criticism of, the Oregon Department of Corrections or Columbia River Correctional Institution. These organizations are simply nodes in a complex web of state, economy, and culture. Their transparency and willingness to support the dying craft of prison

ethnography must be applauded. I am truly grateful, and all readers of this thesis should be as well.

## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

### **The Sociology of the American Prison**

America incarcerates more of her citizens per capita than any other nation (Walmsley 2003). Presently, about two-and-half million people are held under lock and key in the U.S., a majority of which (1.6 million) are behind the walls of state and federal prisons (West et al. 2010). These prisoners (as opposed to jail inmates) are housed in nearly 2,000 facilities across the country (Stephan 2008).

In addition to being the world's champion of incarceration rates, the U.S. releases a high number of people from prison. The number of incoming prisoners (730,860 in 2009) is essentially matched by the number of people being released from prison (729,295 that same year) (West et al. 2010). Overall, an estimated nine out of ten prisoners are expected to be released at some point during their lives (Slevin 2000).

Many who are released from prison eventually return. In their authoritative report on post-prison recidivism, Langan and Levin (2002) found that over half of their 1994 sample of all prisoners released in 15 states were back in prison within three years. This figure, coupled with the authors' findings that about two-thirds of their sample were rearrested within three years, has ignited the popular image of the prison, and the criminal justice system in general, as a "revolving door."

Curiously, although the past four decades have witnessed an unprecedented rise in imprisonment, many social scientists are convinced that the expanding prison has had an almost microscopic influence on the declining crime rate that gained momentum in the early 1990s. Bruce Western (2006), for example, a modern leader in the sociology of

punishment, suggests that 90 percent of the crime rate decline beginning in the early 1990s and spilling into the early twenty-first century would have occurred without the growing prison population. He demonstrates that nearly 70 percent of the increase in imprisonment through the late twentieth century (from about 725,000 to 1.2 million) may only be attributed to about ten percent of the crime rate fall from 1993-2001, and to only two to five percent of the reduction in serious crime rates (2006:186-7;191). Western (2006) provides several reasons for this pattern, but highlights three primary arguments. Firstly, the dramatic increase in imprisoning drug offenders does not avert serious crime (Western 2006:187). Secondly, incarceration's ability to deter crime is weakening because incarceration has become a normal part of life for young black men with low levels of formal education (in other words, the stigma of incarceration for this population is diluted as rates of incarceration expand) (Western 2006:187). And thirdly, those released from prison are probably more likely to be involved in criminal activity *because they were locked up* (Western 2006:187).

If the prison is a mild crime-fighting weapon at best, it is advisable that students of the prison occasionally, if not frequently, step out of the boundaries of criminology. In other words, questions that do not beg the inquiry into the causes and effects of crime and criminals must be asked.<sup>1</sup> Students should instead reinvent the sociology of

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<sup>1</sup> Many of my mentors and peers have criticized my framing of criminology. To be clear, I refer to criminology in this text as the scientific study of the causes and effects of crime and criminals. I therefore frame it as a discipline seeking to explain crime. This is clearly an important task in the social sciences, but it should not be the only lens students look through to make sense of imprisonment. Forfeiting a criminological gaze allows analysts to situate the prison not as an institution of crime control but instead as institution of marginalization control. I recognize that this task has been taken up by many scholars who title themselves "criminologists" and their work "criminological." For example, Richard Quinney's

imprisonment, and of course the inseparable component of prison release, as a sociology of power. I see this campaign as having two primary objectives. Firstly, special attention must be given to the population who enters and exits penitentiaries. This entails population profiling as it pertains to political, market, and status locales. Secondly, this population of prisoners, ex-prisoners, and frequent by passers of the revolving door, must be positioned in a relational context. In other words, they must be located in relation to multiple and overlapping structures of power, be they of state, economy, or culture. Thus, the pages that follow are less criminological and are more in-tune with a political sociology and a sociology of stratification. I seek implications for a social, rather than a criminal, justice.

### **Imprisonment, Release, and Inequality in America**

In their recent annual review on the intersection between incarceration and social stratification, Wakefield and Uggen (2010:400) ask, “Does imprisonment reflect societal disadvantage or cause it?” This is a dual question addressing the patterns of people who go to prison on the one hand, and the impact imprisonment has on their future position in the American hierarchy, on the other hand. Although there is certainly room for debate on the specifics, there is evidence to suggest that the best answer is: imprisonment does both. Those who go to prison, and thus also those in the filtering

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masterpiece, *Criminology: Analysis and Critique of Crime in the United States* (1974), is often hailed as the quintessential Marxist analysis of the criminal justice system. Thus, criticisms that I “stereotype criminology” hold some weight. My intention, however, is not to attack an entire wing of the social sciences, but instead to draw conceptual boundaries around an intellectual perspective and mode of inquiry that is primarily concerned with the phenomena of crime and the role of criminals. In doing this I use the term “criminology.”

stages of arrest and sentencing and those who graduate to “ex-con,” over represent the bottom of the American hierarchy and under represent the middle and the top. With the exception of their gender privilege (more than 9 out of 10 prisoners are male), those entering U.S. prisons hail from disadvantage, as American prisoners are disproportionately poor and non-white (Austin 2004; Western 2006; Wacquant 2009; Wheelock and Uggen 2008; Potter 2004; West et al. 2010). When released from prison, what little opportunities for upward socioeconomic mobility these individuals may have had prior to their imprisonment have decayed, as is evident with their challenges to (re)integrate. Formally marked as an (ex-)criminal, released prisoners face unique challenges in gaining employment, securing shelter, and participating in democracy (Pager 2007; Petersilia 2003; Travis 2005; Uggen et al. 2006).

This intersection between imprisonment, release, and inequality in contemporary America is being dissected with a diverse array of theoretical tools. Some researchers and theorists have examined said intersection with strong impetus from Marx, such as Reiman and Leighton (2010) who point to the under representation of white-collar criminals behind bars. Others, particularly those investigating the release-end of the imprisonment narrative, pull heavily from Weber’s notions of status when theorizing the implications of a prison conviction (e.g., Pager 2007). Also, sometimes kin to Weber’s notion of life chances, life course theorists frame imprisonment as a disruptive and disintegrative event in the life course (e.g., Western 2006). Durkheim, sometimes considered the father of the sociology of punishment, maintains voice in this

discussion as well. Maruna (2011), for example, turns to Durkheimian writings to frame the modern practice of ex-prisoner (re)integration as a “failing ritual.”

However, the key ideas of one core theorist of social inequality, Pierre Bourdieu, have, for the most part, remained foreign to the multidisciplinary topic of imprisonment and release. With the clear exception of his successor, Loïc Wacquant, Bourdieu’s core concepts, of field, capital, and habitus have been rarely applied to answer questions that target the intersection of punishment and inequality. These concepts of field, capital, and habitus, compose the theoretical backdrop of this thesis and the foundation of my empirical journey.

### **Empirical Questions**

I ask two interconnected exploratory questions. These questions address soon-to-be-released prisoners’ pragmatic goals following release and the strategies they will/have employ(ed) in their attempts to accomplish these goals. In both of my questions, I focus on prisoners who are approaching release, in this case those who will be released in six months or less, because they are a relatively un-researched population at ground level (i.e., via ethnography) and their viewpoint as prisoners “approaching the gate” provides a relatively new, but nevertheless important, perspective on imprisonment and release in contemporary America. By asking and exploring these questions I intend to shed light on the mechanisms by which imprisonment worsens inequality and seek implications for Bourdieu’s sociology in the multifaceted study of imprisonment and release.



*Question One: How do soon-to-be-released prisoners understand their upcoming release?*

Literature suggests that soon-to-be-released prisoners are both excited and nervous about their upcoming exit. Many prisoners are likely excited about leaving prison for a few intuitive reasons: to regain a significant amount of liberty and privacy, to return to their families, or to “start fresh.” Joan Petersilia (2009:545), an authority on prison release, suggests that most, if not all, prisoners at the point of release authentically want to “succeed” in transitioning from prison to the free world. This question extends her claim by examining the specific release goals and expectations of prisoners nearing their exit.

*Question Two: How do soon-to-be-released prisoners prepare for their upcoming release?*

This second question targets the strategies soon-to-be-released prisoners employ, or intend to employ, to increase their chances of post-prison (re)integration. Thus, after exploring both the specific and general goals and expectations of soon-to-be-released prisoners, I aim to explore their tactics for accomplishing these goals. On the one hand, this involves an inquiry into how they intend to complete their (re)integration “plans” following release, such as where they intend to live and the types of employment they hope to secure. On the other hand, this requires an inquiry into the strategies these men employ behind bars for purposes of accomplishing the same general goal (i.e., success outside of prison). This question does not target the effectiveness of release preparations. Instead, it addresses the current or intended

strategies that soon-to-be-released prisoners perceive as likely to increase their chances of (re)integration.

My overarching goal in asking and exploring these two questions is to extend the conversation on punishment and stratification in America. In this advancement, I turn to Bourdieu for analytical guidance. This thesis is an exercise in what methodologist Charles Ragin (1994) refers to as theory advancement, since I seek to advance Bourdieu's thinking tools in a relatively new area via qualitative methods.

### **Advancing the Conversation: Outlining the Subsequent Chapters**

I aim to bring Bourdieu (and more specifically his notions of field, capital, and habitus) in conversation with the topic of imprisonment and release. I face two fronts in this task. First, I review the existing literature on imprisonment and release with a Bourdieuan lens. This introduces a contextual backdrop and provides an illustration for the world where soon-to-be-released prisoners live. Second, I address my empirical questions via a self-conducted ethnography of prisoners approaching release in Oregon using Bourdieu's ideas as points of exploratory and analytical inspiration.

The next two chapters engage the first front. Chapter II is my theoretical blueprint. Here, I briefly summarize Bourdieu's relational method, his thinking tools, and his notion of a field of power. I consider Bourdieu a canonical theorist who is level with the founders and forerunners of sociological thought. I therefore treat his ideas as a tradition that transcends his own writings and into the writings of scholars I call "practitioners of Bourdieuan sociology." Wacquant (2008;2009) is not only such a

practitioner, but is also the core theorist who applies Bourdieuan thought to the world of modern American punishment specifically. Therefore, towards the tail end of Chapter II, I review Wacquant's (2009) application and extension. I lean on Wacquant (2008;2009) primarily to position the prison in the field of power. I continue the general conversation set first by Wacquant by asking a series of theoretical questions to be addressed in the subsequent chapters. Chapter III sets out to explore these theoretical questions as I organize a brief literature review on imprisonment, release, and inequality. Here, I treat Bourdieu's field, capital, and habitus as literary themes.

Chapters IV and V engage the second front. In Chapter IV, I outline my data collection and analytical strategies. Chapter V summarizes the results of my research. Data suggest that soon-to-be-released prisoners want to stay out of prison. For most, this means the adoption of what is sometimes called the "straight life," which is more or less prison speak for adopting an integrated and non-criminal lifestyle. Similar to the academic authorities on release, the men I interview and observe believe that an "honest income" (usually referring to stable employment in the formal economy) and permanent housing are essential, but not always exhaustive, elements for going straight, or in other words (re)integrating into American society.

Within these chapters, particularly III and V, I extend my application of Bourdieu's thinking tools by summarizing processes that are best titled "capital erosion" and "habitus adjustment." These budding ideas suggest that imprisonment exacerbates inequality by eroding the capital of individuals (i.e., of prisoners and ex-prisoners), collectives (e.g., families and neighborhoods), and quasi-collectives (e.g., demographic

groups) on the one hand, and adjusting thoughts, perceptions, and actions of prisoners in a disintegrative manner on the other hand.

Chapter VI closes my thesis. I start by reflecting on my research questions and critically assessing the strengths and weaknesses of my methods and data. I then elaborate on the conversation I staged between Bourdieu and imprisonment and release issues in the preceding chapters. Next, in an attempt to balance my data on soon-to-be-released prisoners, I briefly consider information from the “other side of the gate” (i.e., recently released prisoners) and suggest that future research target this population. Lastly, I call for further investigation of erosion and adjustment and suggest guidelines for doing so.

## CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL BLUEPRINT

In this three-part chapter, I lay down the theoretical blueprint of this thesis. In the first section, I outline the selection of Pierre Bourdieu's ideas that inspire the remaining chapters. In a semi-deductive fashion, I briefly summarize Bourdieu's primary "thinking tools" of field, capital, and habitus for the purpose of constructing a body of theoretical concepts that I will employ throughout this thesis. I survey not only many of the writings by Bourdieu, but also several of the writings *about* Bourdieu's theory authored by his intellectual successors. Thus, I treat Bourdieu's theory as an intellectual tradition that extends beyond his own accounts and into the writings of those who might best be titled "practitioners of Bourdieuan sociology."

In the second section, I expand on one of these practitioners, Loïc Wacquant, as the core theorist who advances Bourdieu's ideas into the multidisciplinary topic of punishment and inequality. I summarize Wacquant's notions of neoliberalism, prisonfare, workfare, law-and-order pornography, and other concepts. I draw from Wacquant's recent writings on the American penal state to situate the prison in the American field of power. Both this section and the first section summarize multiple concepts that I will continuously address throughout this thesis.

The third section concludes this chapter by asking three questions. These questions are designed to spark theoretical advancement by refocusing this thesis to address specific topics regarding imprisonment and release in the United States. These should not be understood as questions unanswered by the previous two sections (some are, some are not). Instead, they are questions that beg further exploration.

## PART ONE: BOURDIEU'S SOCIOLOGICAL TRADITION

### **The Relational Method**

One of Bourdieu's objectives is to dissolve arbitrary gaps within sociology. In addressing his opposition to the discipline's dichotomization into oppositional paradigms (e.g., micro versus macro) and competitive modes of inquiry (e.g., statistics versus ethnography), Bourdieu (1989) locates two intellectual traditions that structure these dichotomies, "objectivism" and "subjectivism." Swartz (1997:35) notes that, for Bourdieu, objectivism refers to "all those forms of knowledge that focus on the statistical regularities of human conduct." Objectivism is an intellectual project disproportionately concerned with the material conditions of social life, such as Marx's theory of economic determinism. Conversely, "subjectivist approaches include those emphasizing micro interactions, voluntarism, and methodological individualism" (Swartz 1997:35). In other words, objectivism gives priority to the macro, is concerned with social structure, and is driven by a positivist mode of inquiry, while subjectivism includes sociological considerations of the micro, gives priority to the exploratory, and is often biased towards agency.

Bourdieu introduces the "relational method" to combat this limiting division of labor within the social sciences. This intellectual strategy calls for a simultaneous consideration of both objectivism and subjectivism, which Bourdieu (1989) sees as engaged in a dialectical relationship. The relational method calls for "intellectual triangulation," in which sociologists consider the dual character of social reality, as manifested both outside and inside individuals (Swartz 1997:54,98). In organizing this

method, Bourdieu introduces three primary concepts: “field,” “capital,” and “habitus.”<sup>2</sup>

The relational method is a “technique which ‘thinks’ in terms of relation,” and this is what consequently led to Bourdieu’s conceptualization of field and habitus and what subsequently sparked the body of literature sometimes referred to as “field theory” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:96).

### **Thinking Tools: Field, Capital, and Habitus**

#### *The Game Metaphor:*

For Bourdieu, social actors are comparable to players in a game. Similar to how a football player occupies a position in a football field, social actors occupy positions in “fields of struggle.” These fields of struggle are social arenas structured by regularities, and, similar to a football game, by positions occupied by the multiple players in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:97). Fields are also structured by the distribution of the species of capital, which are “at stake,” and are thus competed for by individuals and groups (Thomson 2008:69). A player’s position and mobility within a field is dependent both on his capital worth and his ability to advantageously exploit that capital to maintain position or navigate the field.

Although Bourdieu consistently uses analogies of game playing and metaphors of a capitalist market system, he does not reduce social actors to purely rational agents.

---

<sup>2</sup> Readers of Bourdieu may reasonably criticize this framing. Field, habitus, and capital were also developed and applied to address other social processes such as domination. Nevertheless, the development of these three concepts may easily be traced to Bourdieu’s evaluations of objectivity and subjectivity. Additionally, while Bourdieu designed other notable concepts, such as “symbolic violence,” I see these three concepts as the most fundamental contributions of Bourdieu’s sociology.

Subconscious dispositions play a critical role in an individual's field navigation strategies. Returning to the game metaphor, a successful player must have a "feel for the game." For Bourdieu, habitus evokes this feel for the game, which may be understood as abilities to read the field ("field vision"), locate its players, and navigate its turf in a seemingly natural way (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:20-1). Field, capital, and habitus work to explain Bourdieu's theory of social practice and emphasize his relational method as they shed light on the relationship between classic dichotomies in sociology: structure versus agency, conscious versus unconscious motivations, and macro versus micro analyses.

#### *The Architecture of Fields:*

In several respects, field is Bourdieu's consideration of social structure. Fields are arenas of struggle that are structured by a system of explicit and implicit rules and regulations, on the one hand, and by the distribution of the capital species throughout the field, on the other hand. An individual within a field occupies a position determined in part by the amount and type of capital that individual possesses. Swartz (1997:117) summarizes fields as "structured spaces that are organized around specific types of capital or combinations of capital."

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) provide the following summary,

In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose



possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relations to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.) (P. 97)

Field addresses the general phenomenon of hierarchy. Power imbalance, be it in terms of the differential distribution of material or nonmaterial resources, structures the field. At the same time, such a distribution of power resources is determined in part by those structural boundaries and borders that are definitive of the field's structure. Thus, Bourdieu's notion of field cannot be understood without a consideration of his concept of capital.

Capital determines actors' positions and is "at stake" (i.e., a limited resource actors compete for) within fields. According to Bourdieu (1989:17), agents are positioned in specific fields and field positions according to two critical dimensions of capital worth: the "overall volume" of capital possessed and the "structure" of such capital. Within fields, actors invest in and exchange capital. However, such market-like actions are significantly dependent on objectified field boundaries and the embodiment of these boundaries (via habitus) within individuals.

According to Bourdieu (1986a), "capital" refers to,

accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. It is *vis insita*, a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures, but it is also a *lex insista*, the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world. (P. 46)

Capital for Bourdieu exists in various forms, or “species.” Generally, Bourdieu and his successors identify four species of capital: economic (e.g., income and wealth), cultural (e.g., knowledge, culture, and educational credentials), social (e.g., connections and obligations), and symbolic (e.g., legitimacy).<sup>3</sup> Species of capital may be converted into each other under certain conditions, as determined by field conditions (Bourdieu 1986a; Swartz 1997:137).

*Economic Capital:*

Economic capital includes income and wealth, and it may be institutionalized as property rights (Bourdieu 1986a:47). Although dependent on the particular field, Bourdieu generally gives conceptual priority to economic capital (Swartz 1997:79). This species of capital may be converted into cultural capital (e.g., paying tuition at an elite college) or social capital (e.g., admission fee for exclusive organizations). Although the reverse conversions are possible, they are typically more difficult.

*Cultural Capital:*

Cultural capital, one of Bourdieu’s trademark concepts, can exist in three forms: the embodied state (e.g., knowledge), the objectified state (e.g., physical culture), and the institutionalized state (e.g., credentials) (Bourdieu 1986a:47-51). Bourdieu argues

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the organization of the capital species is fairly complicated throughout the body of Bourdieuan literature. The broadest distinction among the capital forms is between economic and symbolic capital, in which the latter includes “sub-types,” such as cultural capital (Moore 2008:103). However, within this particular organization it is difficult to locate social capital. In addition to this differentiation of capital, Bourdieu (1986a) discusses three primary “guises” of capital: economic, cultural, and social. In this organization of capital by “guises,” Bourdieu does not include a distinction of symbolic capital, most likely because he explains earlier in this particular writing (Bourdieu 1986a) that symbolic capital is necessary for all forms of capital, including economic capital. While the organization of capital species is somewhat complicated, with discussions of “forms” “species” and “guises” used interchangeably, Bourdieu’s theory of capital generally includes a discussion of economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital.

that culture can be a power resource under certain conditions, and, as demonstrated by its three “states,” cultural capital covers several resources, including verbal faculty, cultural awareness, and educational degrees (Swartz 1997:75). Each of these states, under certain conditions, may be converted into economic capital, a typically more dominant resource within a given field (Bourdieu 1986a:47). The three states are all manifestations of culture as power, but are significantly different in terms of form.

The embodied state of cultural capital includes intangible cultural resources that individuals accumulate internally. Bourdieu (1986a:48) describes embodied cultural capital as “linked to the body and presupposed embodiment.” Literacy, for example, may be understood as a basic form of embodied cultural capital, as literate individuals can decode combinations cultural symbols in the forms of letters and digits and therefore navigate cultural channels structured by written language. Embodied cultural capital may be understood as cultural “know-how.” Specific manifestations of such capital are dependent on the field and what is at stake within that field. The accumulation of embodied cultural capital, similar to all capital, is “interest oriented,” whether conscious or unconscious, and is acquired by means of labor, or in this case a form of self-labor.<sup>4,5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For Bourdieu, all action is “interest oriented” (Swartz 1997:99). However, this does not imply rational choice theory or utilitarianism. Such “interests,” like those motivating the acquirement of embodied cultural capital, are guided by field position (objective relations) and habitus (subjective relations).

<sup>5</sup> The key difference between embodied cultural capital and habitus is that the former is necessarily “at stake” and requires labor, while the latter imposes culture typically on a more passive level upon individuals. Thus, both concepts may share similar indicators (e.g., ability to interpret particular cultural symbols), but they nevertheless hold different meanings.

Bourdieu (1986a) connects embodied cultural capital and labor:

The work of acquisition is work on oneself (self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost (*on paie de sa personne*, as we say in French), an investment, above all of time, but also of that socially constituted for of *libido sciendi*, with all the privation, renunciation, and sacrifice it may entail. (P. 48)

Unlike the embodied state, objectified cultural capital includes cultural power resources that are tangible. Bourdieu (1986a:50) defines objectified cultural capital as “cultural capital objectified in material objects and media.” While specifics are dependent on the field under analysis, objectified cultural capital are objects worthy of competition and are accepted as valuable by field occupants. Take, for example, the upper management sector of the business field in America. Within this arena, particular materialized status resources, such as watches and cars, are competitively accumulated by businessmen for purposes of status, or in other words for purposes of field position maintenance or mobility.

Although objective cultural capital is material, it nevertheless harbors symbolic value and requires legitimacy within a given field (Bourdieu 1986a:50). Thus, not all physical culture constitutes objectified cultural capital. Cultural items are capital when they are “appropriated by agents and implemented and invested as a weapon” (Bourdieu 1986a:50). Objectified cultural capital, like all forms of capital, is “at stake” in a field of struggle, functions to maintain or enhance field position, and holds value vis-à-vis legitimacy as defined by the regulators of cultural boundaries of worth (e.g., intellectuals, state nobility, cultural critics).

The third state, institutionalized cultural capital, almost always refers to educational credentials, but it may be applied to other resources (Swartz 1997:76). Essentially, the institutionalized state of cultural capital confers “institutional recognition” (Bourdieu 1986a:51). A degree from a state accredited university, for example, is accumulated by labor and is valuable in that it symbolically represents that labor in a somewhat objective fashion. This is also evident with several basic resources that are taken-for-granted by most American citizens, such as a state identification card, which is a resource necessary for accessing many fields in America, such as the formal labor market.<sup>6</sup>

Bourdieu (1986a) describes institutionalized cultural capital in general, and the academic credential in particular, as

a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture, social alchemy produces a form of cultural capital which has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis its bearer and even vis-à-vis the cultural capital he effectively possesses at a given moment in time. (P. 50-1)

#### *Social Capital:*

Bourdieu (1986a) also considers a critical resource he titles “social capital,” and provides the following definition,

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition– or in other words,

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<sup>6</sup> A reader may justifiably criticize this example by arguing that such resources are not “at stake.” However, for the population I am studying specifically, and disintegrated populations in general (e.g., illegal immigrants), such bureaucratic resources are worthy of competition.

to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of a collectively-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (P. 51)

Social capital may take the form of practical and informal exchanges or may be “socially instituted,” such as in the case of a family name (Bourdieu 1986a:51). Such capital structures material and symbolic exchange between individuals, and therefore may provide channels for other forms of capital exchange between actors within a given field. Social capital holds value in part by its potential exchange rate with other capital forms. In other words, an individual has high social capital when his social connections can effectively mobilize the exchange of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986a:51).

In some respects, Bourdieu’s social capital is similar to popular uses of the term, such as those associated with Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* (2000). Also, the general claim that that social connections influence social and economic positions is fairly intuitive and has been addressed by multiple social scientists, such as Mark Granovetter in *Getting a Job* (1974). However, Bourdieu’s social capital is unique in that it is *always* considered in relation to fields of struggle, habitus, and other capital species. Social connections and obligations are more than simply markers of integration and can take the form of a power resource that has the potential to be converted into other species of capital, and therefore influences, and is influenced by, field position. Bourdieu’s social capital is thus distinct from popular conceptualizations of social capital as simply an indicator of integration, network position, or reciprocity.

### *Symbolic Capital:*

Bourdieu's symbolic capital, at least to some degree, encompasses all the species of capital discussed above. For example, even a 20 dollar bill, a clear form of economic capital, must harbor symbolic value; otherwise it is only valuable in its utility as paper. Such currency holds legitimacy within both the formal and informal economy, and this legitimacy is imposed and regulated by the state.<sup>7</sup>

Bourdieu (1986a) provide the following definition of symbolic capital:

Symbolic capital, that is to say, capital—in whatever form—insofar as it is represented, i.e., apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition, presupposes the intervention of the habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive capacity. (P.56)

In this thesis, I use Bourdieu's symbolic capital to refer more limitedly to markers of honor and prestige. On the one hand, this includes a discussion of reputation, specifically in regard to those formal markings of the criminal record, employment background, and rental histories. On the other hand, this includes a consideration of status in the American hierarchy. Here, most of my effort is dedicated to a discussion of the shameful titles of "poor man," with its connotations of "lazy" and "dependent," and the title of "black man," with its connotations of "dangerous." Further details of this application are provided in the next chapter as I bring Bourdieu's symbolic capital in conversations with the notion of controlling images (e.g., "Willie Horton") and Irwin's

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<sup>7</sup> In several respects, Bourdieu's notions of symbolic capital, and subsequently his complementary notions of "symbolic power" and "symbolic violence" speak to Weber's discussions of legitimacy.

(1980) discussion of (dis)reputability. However, next I conclude my brief review of Bourdieu's capital.

*Clarifying the Capital Concept:*

An actor's admission, position, and movement within a field are influenced by both the amount and the type of capital he or she possesses. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:107-9) note fields impose something like an "admission fee" criteria where access to a given field is dependent on an individual's capital worth. Following admission, an actor's capital worth determines, and is determined by, his or her field position (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:108). Individuals draw from the species of capital, consciously or not, to either enhance or maintain their field position (Swartz 1997:73-4). The capital species are therefore dependent on, and determinate of, social position and are "at stake" within fields of struggle.

Not only are capital accumulations and investments points of struggle, so too are the definitions of capital and the agreed upon rates of exchange between capital species. As noted earlier, Bourdieu gives conceptual priority to the economic form of capital over others. Thus, for those well endowed in cultural capital but relatively low in economic capital (e.g., liberal arts professors), they have incentive to challenge the worth of economic capital and embellish the value of cultural capital (e.g., through such phrases as "knowledge is more valuable than money"). Details of such struggles are made more evident in Bourdieu's discussion of the "field of power," which will be addressed later in this chapter.



Before I depart from reviewing Bourdieu's capital, and before I apply it throughout this thesis, I find it necessary to dismiss poor and invalid applications of the concept by making two points. First, capital structures and is structured by field. Therefore, at bare minimum, social structure and hierarchy must be considered. Within this framework it is a fallacy to discuss social capital as a term synonymous with "social ties" and bland notions of reciprocity. Consider the following example as it relates to the topic of my thesis. A prisoner certainly builds social connections behind bars with his convict peers. However, I argue here and in other sections of this thesis (particularly the next chapter) that such bonds are *not* clear forms of social capital, especially when considering the intersection of imprisonment and stratification in America. In some respects, the bonds built behind prison are comparable to the bonds built within poor neighborhoods. Relations of reciprocity within both arenas are certainly built, but those connections have minimum capital value within America's expansive matrix of inequality. At a general level, such bonds produce no upward mobility opportunities. In other words, they have a low exchange rate. It is thus fair to conclude that behind bar prison networking is generally not a form of social capital investment. This framework also suggests a dismissal of any fabricated notions of "criminal sub-cultural capital."

Second, at the level of the individual, a discussion of accumulating, holding, or exchanging capital does not imply self-governing rationality. The use of capital is dependent on a "feel for the game," or in other words, *habitus*. I review this notion next.

### *Habitus:*

As a concept, habitus is one of Bourdieu's core strategies in employing the relational method. The notion of habitus is internally relational, as it addresses the interplay between both conscious and unconscious "interests," and the seemingly competitive ideas of agency and structure. At the same time, the concept is designed to be externally relational, as it is always employed in terms of its relationship to field, and consequently capital. Habitus structures action as well as thoughts and perceptions. Bourdieu frames habitus as engendering "all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions (field and field position), and no others" (Bourdieu 1977:95, parentheses added).

Bourdieu (1990) defines habitus as

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representation that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (P. 53)

An individual's habitus is developed significantly through the processes of primary socialization. Sallaz (2010) notes that through one's experience in his or her family, "cultural principles," become "inscribed in one's body" and "undergird action and identity throughout the life course." In a class-based, racialized, and gendered society, habitus formation via the family becomes somewhat shared among groups with

comparable family experience due to similar positions in the material and nonmaterial hierarchy of their community.

Habitus can and does change over time, but such an evolution is slow (Swartz 1997:107; Maton 2008:53). As children become exposed to other institutions (e.g., education) and enter specific sectors of the economy, their habituses slowly adjust to their positioning in various fields. Sallaz (2010) describes habitus as “coherently layered.” This layering process begins as children leave their primary group and interact with different sites of socialization (Sallaz 2010). However, these multiple socialization experiences generally function “in synch” with one another (Sallaz 2010). For example, a child from an upper class family will likely be exposed to social spaces (in)formally reserved by other upper class youth (e.g., private school) and will likely occupy comparable spaces throughout the life course. From this perspective, an actor’s trajectory is significantly influenced by his or her class based family experience. The process of entering various fields and field positions following childhood is significantly dependent on one’s habitus as structured by the material and symbolic conditions of family.

Habitus evokes a sense of place, and therefore works to consciously and subconsciously pull actors to particular fields and field positions (Swartz 1997:115). Maton (2008:57) suggests that habitus, in relation to field, produces a sense of place comparable to the analogy “fish in water” versus “fish out of water.” Actors gravitate towards those fields and field positions that match their dispositions and therefore do

not generate a “field-habitus clash” (Maton 2008:58-9). Habitus embodies the boundaries of a field and limits action (Swartz 1997:103).

Bourdieu (1984) demonstrates habitus’ ability to evoke this sense of place:

Objective limits become a sense of limits, a practical anticipation of objective limits acquired by experience of objective limits, a “sense of one’s place” which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, place and so forth from which one is excluded. (P. 471)

Habitus may be examined via its effects (e.g., thoughts, action, and perception).<sup>8</sup>

Even the most mundane mannerisms and bodily movements have the potential to shed light on habitus. According to Bourdieu (1990:71), each position within a field of struggle harbors a list of socially qualified movements of the body. Generally on a subconscious level, the body engages in elementary acts, such as stance and posture, which evoke “virtues and states of mind” (Bourdieu 1990:70). Similarly, an examination of thoughts and perception may indicate habitus. In *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu analyzes the network of actions, thoughts, and perceptions by considering the interplay between cultural consumption (action) and taste (perception).

Habitus is structured by capital and guides one’s use of capital resources (Bourdieu 1985:13). Thus, the shape of an individual’s habitus is molded in part by his or her capital worth and use of that capital. Habitus is dependent on the material and the symbolic experiences throughout the life course. Simultaneously, habitus guides interests, aspirations, and thoughts, and therefore structures both the *motivations* for

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<sup>8</sup> It is generally agreed upon that habitus cannot be analyzed, however its effects may be approached as indicators of the concept. Maton (2008:62) states, “empirically, one does not ‘see’ a habitus but rather the effects of a habitus in the practices and beliefs to which it gives rise.”

capital investments and exchanges and the “know-how” necessary for navigating such investments and exchanges.

Habitus imposes logic, and that logic is also characteristic to the structure of fields. Within this framework, the notion of “logic” does not operate in the same manner it does in rational choice theory or in utilitarian models of the term. Rather, logic may be understood as mindsets and systems of thoughts and conclusions that guide practices within a field. In emphasizing field logic, Bourdieu contrasts the logic of the artistic field with the logic of the business field, in which the former is guided by “rejecting or reversing the law of material profit” while the latter is guided by the logic of “business is business,” which promotes strictly material driven interests (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:97-8). Logic is therefore “practical,” or in other words, relative to particular conditions of a field and the guiding “philosophy” (e.g., “business is business”) of that field. This practical logic structures both practices and rules within a field, including the movement and reproduction of capital. For Bourdieu, logic is structured both by field and habitus and is demonstrative of the innate relation between these two concepts.

As demonstrated by the phrase “structuring structure,” habitus addresses the relationship between individual and social history and the reproduction of power asymmetry throughout fields. Maton (2008:51) notes that habitus is *structured* by “one’s circumstances,” or in other words, an individual’s field position and relative capital. At the same time, habitus is *structuring* as it influences an individual’s current

and upcoming practices (Maton 2008:51). Habitus is shaped by one's world experience and motivates actions that function to reproduce those experiences (Sallaz 2010).

Therefore, as a thinking tool, habitus also addresses the topic of time. An individual's habitus is shaped by his subjective history (e.g., via primary socialization) and the objectified history of the field he occupies. Habitus also structures current actions and readings of the field, and frames reasonable perceptions of the future (Swartz 1997:103;106;112; Maton 2008:52;3;58). Bourdieu (1990:54) notes that habitus is a product of history, produces individual and collective practices ("more history") and shapes anticipations. Habitus is often referred to as "embodied history," which Sallaz (2010) summarizes as Bourdieu's explanation that "the past lives on in the present and shapes the future."

*Practice:*

Social practice is dependent on the interplay between field, capital, and habitus. Bourdieu (1986b:101) uses the following formula to organize these three concepts and demonstrate how they produce practice:

$$[(\text{habitus})(\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

Maton (2008:51) summarizes the equation as "practice results from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play of the social arena (field)." Thus, these three thinking tools cannot be evaluated in isolation, and each must be considered when advancing or testing Bourdieu's ideas (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:96).

## The Field of Power

While Bourdieu himself addresses multiple fields, he always positions them in relation to the *field of power*. Given that people occupy more than one field at a time (e.g., a college professor holds a position in the field of academia, the economic field, and others), these fields and their actors occupy positions within this broader field (Thomson 2008:70). According to Swartz (1997:136), the field of power functions as a “sort of ‘meta-field’ that operates as an organizing principle of differentiation and struggle throughout all fields.”

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) provide the following definition,

The field of power is a field of forces defined by the structure of the existing balance of forces between forms of power, or between different species of capital. It is also simultaneously a field of struggles for power among the holders of different forms of power. It is a space of play and competition in which the social agents and institutions which all possess the determinate quantity of specific capital (economic and cultural capital in particular) sufficient to occupy the dominant positions within their respective fields...confront one another in strategies aimed at preserving or transforming this balance of forces. (P. 76n)

Fields are hierarchically ordered within the field of power, in which certain fields are *dominant* while others are *dominated*. Such struggle between fields is determined in part by the competition between economic and cultural resources. Fields of struggle, and subsequently social actors and institutions, tend to disproportionately draw from one of these two resources (Swartz 1997:13-7). Within the field of power, various fields of struggle compete not only for cultural and economic capital but also for the accepted

worth of these resources and the exchange rate between them. Thus, the field of power is “organized as chiasmatic structure,” in which two principles of hierachization, economic capital (“the dominant principle of hierachization”) and cultural capital (“the dominated principle of hierachization”), structure this meta-field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:76n).

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) note that the field of power encompasses

relations of force that obtain between the social positions which guarantee their occupants a quantum of social force, or of capital, such that they are able to enter into the struggles over the monopoly of power, of which struggles over the definition of the legitimate form of power are a crucial dimension (P. 229-230).

When employing field theory, it is essential to consider the field of power (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:104-5). Primary fields considered within the field of power include the economic field, the bureaucratic field (i.e., the state), the field of cultural production, the field of media, and the academic field. Each of these large fields harbor subfields, such as the field of cultural production, which includes the subfield of art, which includes additional subfields of literature, painting, and others (Thomson 2008:72). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:104-5) note that field analysis of any sort or level requires an analysis of the field of power. Thus, in addition to considering how the three thinking tools interact to produce social practice, field theory practitioners consider how the field of power and its principles of domination (i.e., economic and cultural capital) function to position fields in relation to social power, and consequently in relation to each other.



## **The State as a Bureaucratic Field**

When bringing Bourdieu's sociological tradition in conversation with imprisonment and release issues in the U.S., a brief discussion of the state is warranted. Despite the myth of a prison-industrial complex (see next section), the practices of incarceration, be it prisons or jails, and those even larger sister programs of community corrections (i.e., parole and probation), are projects of the state. And, while a discussion of punishment and inequality must certainly consider multiple issues of power, including those deemed political, social, cultural, and economic, particular attention must be given to the social organ that exercises legitimate punishment, the state. Part Two of this chapter reviews how Wacquant (2008a;2009;2010a;2010b) positions the prison (and more generally the criminal justice system) in relation to state, economy, and culture, but first I briefly review Bourdieu on the state.

In several respects, Bourdieu's state may be understood as a bank of power. The state holds a monopoly over the legitimate exercise of violence in its physical and symbolic forms (Bourdieu 1994). Legitimate physical violence, or what Bourdieu (1994) titles the "capital of physical force," is applied by specialized groups claimed by the state (e.g., army, police, and prisons). Legitimate symbolic violence, or the use of symbolic capital by the state, imposes and warrants classification schemes and principles of vision and division (Bourdieu 1994). The state has a unique ability to legitimately define the world. The monopoly over legitimate physical and symbolic violence are made possible by the concentration of capital among those agencies and positions that make up the state.

Bourdieu (1994) provides the following synopsis,

The state is the *culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital*: capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police), economic capital, cultural or (better) informational capital, and symbolic capital. It is this concentration as such which constitutes the state as the holder of a sort of meta-capital granting power over other species of capital and over their holders. Concentration of the different species of capital (which proceed hand in hand with the construction of the corresponding fields) leads indeed to the *emergence* of specific, properly statist capital...which enables the state to exercise power over the different fields and over the different particular species of capital, and especially over the rates of conversion between (and thereby over the relations of force between their respective holders) (P.4).

This “statist capital,” allows for governing practices (in the broadest sense of the phrase) over various realms, including those key fields in the field of power, and of course the citizenry. In the U.S., the four subsets (for lack of a better term) of statist capital are concentrated in the broad system we call the “American Government,” yet they are fragmented across its strata (i.e., federal, state, county, and municipal). Bourdieu (1994) calls upon intellectuals to rethink the state as a “bureaucratic field.” The next section addresses both the position of incarceration practices as it pertains to the field of power generally and the bureaucratic field specifically.

## PART TWO: TURNING TO WACQUANT TO LOCATE THE PRISON

Before jumping into the specifics of capital and habitus among people entering, contained, and released from prison, it is necessary to locate the American prison within the aggregate field of power. Wacquant, a prison ethnographer and one of Bourdieu’s

students and collaborators, is the core sociologist who advances Bourdieu's ideas into the multidisciplinary topic of punishment and inequality.<sup>9</sup> A brief review of Wacquant's writings provides insight into where the American prison sits in the field of power.

Wacquant analyzes the interplay between state, economy, culture, and imprisonment via the relational method and Bourdieu's conceptualization of the field of power. He approaches prisons specifically, and the criminal justice system in general, as an expanding sector of the state charged with managing "deregulated labor, ethnoracial hierarchy, and urban marginality in the contemporary United States" (Wacquant 2008a:33).<sup>10</sup> From the relational perspective, Wacquant (2009:1,14) considers how the state maintains two forms of order: material order (i.e., economic order) and symbolic order (i.e., moral order). However, before reviewing the details of incarceration practices in America, and subsequently unveiling the location of the prison, it is necessary to first dismiss two commonly held myths.

### **Myth Busting "Mass Incarceration" and "The Prison Industrial Complex"**

#### *The Myth of Mass Incarceration:*

For Wacquant (2008a;2009;2010a;2010b) the term "mass incarceration" frequently used by sociologists (e.g., Pager 2007 and Western 2006) inappropriately frames incarceration practices in the United States. Prisons and jails are not spaces for

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<sup>9</sup> My discussion of Wacquant's work draws heavily from his recent book *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (2009). Although I focus primarily on his advancements of Bourdieu's ideas on democratic state and the field of power, it is necessary to note that Wacquant also links his core arguments to Michel Foucault, David Garland, and others.

<sup>10</sup> In *Punishing Poor* (2009:4-5), Wacquant identifies three major sectors of the state: "the economic arm," "the social bosom" and the "penal fist."

the masses. Instead, prisons and jails, along with courtrooms and the backseats of squad cars, are reserved for marginalized and dishonored populations. For Wacquant (2008a;2009;2010a;2010b), these perceived places of punishment, crime control, and justice are in reality spaces for poverty management. They are spaces reserved for the “precarious sectors of the working class” (Wacquant 2009:129). The profile of the jail and prison detainee does not reflect the masses. Instead he (most are male) is either unemployed and poor or laboring as the “working poor,” which Wacquant (2009:70) defines as “that fraction of the working class that does not manage to escape poverty *although they work*, but who are largely ineligible for social protections *because they work at poverty*.”

From this perspective, mass incarceration is the myth and “hyperincarceration” is the reality. Here on out, hyperincarceration refers to the overrepresentation of the poor in U.S. prisons and jails, and by extension in the arrest and court records. In more ways than not, hyperincarceration is terminologically equivalent to the phrase “penalizing poverty.” For Wacquant (2009:69-70) “incarceration serves above all to regulate, if not perpetuate, poverty and to warehouse the human rejects of the market.” Incarcerated men are disproportionately poor, urban, and non-white (specifically black, but also Latino). Further details of these patterns are explored in this chapter and the remainder of my thesis (particularly Chapter III), but first I turn to Wacquant (2009;2010a) to dispel another myth.

*The Myth of The Prison-Industrial Complex:*

Wacquant (2010a) calls for a slaying of the prison-industrial complex “chimera.”

The notion of a prison-industrial complex is flawed in multiple ways, but two specific points made by Wacquant (2009;2010a) are particularly relevant for this thesis. First, the prison-industrial complex is a rhetorical argument and perspective with biases that, *at very best*, exaggerate and distort the material motivations of hyperincarceration.

Advocates of the prison-industrial complex notion suggest that an omnipotent ruling class (specifically greedy capitalists and corrupt politicians) seek to make a profit off of America’s contained population (e.g., by means of privatizing prisons and exploiting prison labor) and subsequently execute conscious plans to increase the rate of incarceration for means of increasing profit (Wacquant 2009:xx). Even when holding such claims as valid (which there is substantial evidence suggesting, if not proving, they are not), such a perspective fails to account for the symbolic and non-material motivations of hyperincarceration, such as the thirst for punishment and disdain for the “lazy,” and even worse the “lawless,” poor held by the American collective conscious (Wacquant 2009). The prison remains a “core civic theater for dramatizing collective norms, asserting political authority, and staging the sovereignty of the state” (Wacquant 2010a).

Second, and more importantly, for Wacquant (2010a;2009), the prison-industrial complex simply does not exist. In addition to the theoretical support that will be outlined in the reminder of this chapter subsection, Wacquant (2010a) presents a few key statistics that both tarnish the applicability of the prison-industrial complex idea and

guts the core points of “evidence” highlighted by its advocates. One such point is that prisons and jails have “remained stubbornly and distinctively public” as only six percent (at its peak) of the “carceral market” was privatized in the year 2000, only one-fourth of the private prison industry’s projected goal in 1995 (Wacquant 2010a:610).<sup>11</sup> Also, fears that U.S. jail detainees and prisoners are being exploited by private companies for their labor are, for the most part, fabricated. Wacquant (2010a:609) notes that “at peak use” (around the year 2002) roughly “one-quarter of one per cent of the carceral population” in America were employed by private firms.

It may be advisable to frame the prison-industrial complex as a mythological conspiracy tale. For Wacquant (2009), the prison is a political institution, not an economic one. It is a contemporary form of poverty management in America. The prison occupies a particular component, or a sector, of the U.S. bureaucratic field. Holding both the dismissal of the prison-industrial complex and criticisms of so-called “mass” incarceration as warranted and necessary, I now provide a more detailed review of Wacquant’s theory to locate the prison in the field of power.

### **The Prison, the Bureaucratic Field, and Neoliberalism**

Wacquant’s analysis of the American criminal justice system is best described as an exercise in political and economic sociology, rather than criminology. In terms of situating the criminal justice system as an expanding wing of governance, Wacquant

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<sup>11</sup> Here, a proponent of the prison industrial complex may point to the fact that in 2005 roughly a quarter of state and federal prisons (415 of 1,821) were private; however, these facilities only hold about seven percent of the daily prisoner population (Stephan 2008).

(2009:289) actively fills a gap in Bourdieu's theory of the state as it relates to the field of power. He borrows from Bourdieu's discussion of the state as a bureaucratic field, which Wacquant (2009:289) defines as "a splintered space of forces vying over the definition and distribution of public goods." He also advances Bourdieu's (1999) understanding of the state as encompassing two antagonistic hands of governance, the "Left hand" (feminine side in charge of social functions) and the "Right hand" (masculine side in charge of economic discipline) which both "vie for preeminence inside the bureaucratic field" (Wacquant 2009:289). Wacquant (2009:289-90) sees hyperincarceration, along with get-tough welfare policies, as a "remasculinization of the state," in which the Right arm is strengthened and the Left arm weakened. In extending Bourdieu's ideas of the state, Wacquant (2009:289) calls for "inserting the police, the courts, and the prison as core constituents of the 'Right hand.'" Key to this discussion is the notion of "neoliberalism."

For both Wacquant and Bourdieu, neoliberalism is a particular ideological project and state practice that permeates the field of power.<sup>12</sup> Wacquant (2010b:213-4) highlights the neoliberal state as encompassing four institutional logics: "economic deregulation," "welfare state devolution, retraction, and recomposition," "an expansive, intrusive, and proactive penal apparatus," and "the cultural trope of individual responsibility." The latter logic of individual responsibility arguably motivates the three

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<sup>12</sup> I limit this discussion of neoliberalism to the U.S., but both Wacquant and Bourdieu consider neoliberalism within other Western nations, most notably France.

former logics, with individualism promoting a market *free* of government, a cleansing of *dependent* welfare recipients, and a get-tough approach to managing *rational* criminals.

Wacquant (2009) defines neoliberalism

as ideological project and government practice mandating submission to the 'free market' and the celebration of 'individual responsibility' in all realms, on the one hand, and the deployment of punitive and proactive law-enforcement policies targeting street delinquency and the categories trapped in the margins and cracks of the new economic and moral order coming into being under the conjoint empire of financialized capital and flexible wage labor, on the other hand. (P.1)

Within the American field of power, the political, academic, and cultural fields are influenced by, and biased toward, neoliberal ideology. Neoliberalism acts something like a generalized field logic among the primary fields contending for power. The state favors the generation of economic, criminal, and social policies that advance a free market and exercise national obsessions over individualism (Wacquant 2009:1;5;259;283). Similarly, the academic field is biased towards evidence highlighting the benefits of under-regulated economies and notions of individual rationality, which in turn legitimate and promote complementary state policies (e.g., the "Broken Windows Hypothesis" and "Quality of Life Policing") (Wacquant 2009:31;265-8). The broad field of media, and what Wacquant (2009:195) more notably titles "the journalistic field," cements neoliberal ideology within an audience beyond the key contenders inside the field of power. While all of these fields have particular logics, which may be somewhat autonomous, neoliberalism as ideology and practice is nevertheless promoted within the aggregate field of power.



Wacquant (2009:8) describes the neoliberal state as a “liberal paternalist regime,” in which government is permissive at the top of the class system and authoritarian at the bottom. In this respect, neoliberalism calls for a size of government that may best be described as “big-small.” Big government exists through panoptical welfare polices and over-incarcerating the poor. At the same time, small government exists through little to no regulation of the bourgeoisie via policies of market deregulation and the under emphasis of white collar crime in the criminal justice system. In regard to the American state’s paternalistic and authoritarian approach to handling the poor, Wacquant (2009) suggests it has engaged in a double regulation project, which I review next.

### **Prisonfare and Workfare**

Wacquant’s (2009:290-1) notion of double regulation includes what he refers to as “prisonfare” and “workfare.” From this viewpoint, neoliberalism has sparked two complementary state poverty management programs, punitive expansion and welfare retrenchment. The former has expanded both the definition of criminals and efforts to contain them (prisonfare) and the latter works to punish so-called “welfare queens” and force them into underpaid sectors of the economy (welfare turned workfare) (2009: 4-5;16-7). This involves pulling in a social safety net and casting out a penal dragnet, which are relatively inseparable campaigns (Wacquant 2009: 1-3, 45-6, 294). Wacquant (2009: 97-9;65-7) highlights major policies that demonstrate this double regulation, such as the 1996 welfare reform requiring welfare recipients to work for limited assistance and the

penal dragnet expansion materialized via determinate sentencing, mandatory minimums, truth in sentencing, “three strike” laws, and quality of life policing. Both workfare and prisonfare emerge under the mask of individualism, with 1996 welfare reform titled “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act” and the listed penal policies justified by faith in objective rational choice (Wacquant 2009:101;65-7).

Together, prisonfare and workfare compile a double regulation of poverty, with each targeting the poor, as nearly all of America’s welfare recipients “live below half of the federal poverty line, as do two thirds of (jail) detainees, owing to their shaped peripheral status on the low-wage labor market” (Wacquant 2009:98-9, parenthesis added). One critical difference between these two projects is that workfare regulates poor women and prisonfare regulates poor men. Wacquant (2009:99) argues that, “the assistantial and carceral wings of the neoliberal state are essentially the two gender sides of the same population coin drawn from the marginalized fractions of the postindustrial working class.” Destitute wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of urban America are caught in a welfare system that inadequately combats poverty, while their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons are contained in a penal warehouse reserved primarily for men pushed out, or towards the very bottom, of the formal economy.

### **Employing the Relational Method to Unveil Hyperincarceration**

In his discussion of hyperincarceration, and more generally the recent “law-and-order upsurge” in the West, Wacquant (2009:xv-xvii) adopts both material and symbolic

perspectives. In more ways than not this may be understood as an analytical exercise in Bourdieu's relational method, in which objective (in this case material/economic) and subjective (in this case non-material/symbolic) perspectives are employed. From a more economic viewpoint, Wacquant (2009:xvi;xxii) notes that prisons and jails physically neutralize poor men and house those systematically denied access or adequate position to the formal economy (e.g., as a fallout to deindustrialization, deunionization, and other neoliberal reconstructions of labor). By itself, this argument is not unique, nor does Wacquant claim it to be.<sup>13</sup>

For Wacquant, however, recognition of the material conditions that motivate the age of hyperincarceration is necessary but it is not sufficient for analyzing the interplay between inequality and punishment. Wacquant (2009) considers how symbolic forces, such as the "law-and-order logic" that permeates criminological theory, policy, and the American public, also fuel the era of hyperincarceration. There are symbolic purposes to incarceration, such as the state overtly reinforcing its authority upon the collective conscious of the poor (Wacquant 2009:7). Also, it is important to recognize that criminal justice logic does not frame the police, courts, and prisons as punishing the poor, but

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<sup>13</sup> Theorists of crime have long recognized the material conditions promoting criminal definitions and, subsequently, state employed punishment practices. Western (2006), for example, argues that prisons and jails work to maintain the invisibility of poverty in America. Incarcerated men are often excluded from government statistics on economic activity, joblessness, and poverty, consequently producing an exaggeration in the decline of race and economic inequality in the U.S. (Western 2006:87-9). More generally, Marxist criminologists have long considered the phenomenon of disproportionately criminalizing and over punishing the poor. In his discussion of "the social reality of crime," Quinney (1974) suggests that "definitions of crime are composed of behaviors that conflict with the class interests of the dominant economic class." As a byproduct of class struggle, these formal definitions of deviant behavior are argued by Quinney (1974) to control the behaviors of the subordinate class. Similarly, Reiman and Leighton (2010:28,111) stress that the formal definitions of "crime" are primarily reserved for the dangerous actions of the poor.

rather as punishing *criminals*, which terminologically taps into shared conceptions of immorality. Public distain for ex-convicts, for example, not only stems from their position in the economy (most are poor) but from the “fact” that they violated a moral code (Wacquant 2009:186). Irwin’s (1985) *The Jail* also links the connections between criminal violations of economic and moral order. Irwin (1985:2) conceptualizes a “rabble class” (i.e., “the lowest class of people”), which is not only poor, but is also perceived as disreputable. The rabble class finds itself overwhelmingly swept into county and city jails because they commit crimes that are perceived as more *offensive*, such as public urination, rather than *serious*, such as rape (1985:18;23).<sup>14</sup>

In terms of symbolic motivations and justifications for the age of hyperincarceration, Wacquant (2009; 2010b) discusses a “law-and-order pornography” that permeates the American collective conscious. Law-and-order pornography “reduces the fight against delinquency to a ritualized spectacle that serves only to feed the fantasies of order of the citizenry and signify the virile authority of state decision-makers” (Wacquant 2009:283). Collective catharsis seems to emerge from journalistic accounts of criminal justice at work (e.g., the TV program “Cops” and news coverage of court sentencing). From this view, criminal justice carries out public revenge fantasies against criminals in a formulaic manner. Wacquant’s pornography metaphor taps into

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<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that Irwin (1985) discusses offensiveness and seriousness as an interaction effect, but he also clearly notes that jails are for the most part latently charged with handling crimes that are mild to high in offensiveness but low in seriousness. He suggests, “the jail, unlike the prison, has little to do with serous crime” (1985:18). However, I argue the recent wave of hyperincarceration, motivated in part by the so-called “war on drugs” and “get tough” legislation, has opened the prison gates to crimes of higher offensiveness and lower seriousness as a growing proportion of non-violent convicts fill prison cells. Thus, the “rabble class” and “disreputability” are appropriate concepts to make sense of a large chunk U.S. prison population in the early twenty-first century.

the symbolic function of the criminal justice system, a component often neglected by material criminologists (e.g., critical criminology and economic strain theory). A relational approach to criminal punishment suggests that police, courts, jails, and prisons target those who are both the *most destitute* and who are perceived to be the *least moral*.<sup>15</sup>

### **Locating the Prison in the Field of Power**

Therefore, prisons occupy a particular space within the field of power.

Wacquant's theoretical and empirical writings on the era of hyperincarceration situate the American prison specifically, and the criminal justice system at large, in relation to several fields: the bureaucratic field (i.e., the state), the economic field, the academic field, and the journalistic field. These fields structure, and are structured by, the socio-cultural-political-economic climate of neoliberalism, which promotes three core policy movements: free market advancement and protection, social policy retrenchment, and an unprecedented increase in U.S. penal policies.

For Wacquant (2009), the prison is located in a growing sector of the bureaucratic field. In other words, the prison is located in an expanding wing of governance. Incarceration practices sit next to other state programs charged with poverty management. Its position is cemented because various fields within the

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<sup>15</sup> When coupling these notions of neoliberalism and law-and-order pornography, the emergence of particular state policies that either promote prison expansion (e.g., "get tough laws" developed under the hypothesis of complete agency) or promote many of the conditions favorable to prison expansion (e.g., deindustrialization and welfare retrenchment) come as no surprise. The American state operates under a philosophy and network of arguments favoring free markets and rational individuals, and serves a public who distains the lawless poor and thirsts for retribution.

aggregate field of power depend, and are dependent on, its existence (e.g., imprisonment as a housing response to neoliberal economic restructuring).

### PART THREE: QUESTIONS FOR IMPRISONMENT AND RELEASE

In regard to my specific inquiry into soon-to-be-released prisoners, some relevant theoretical questions emerge. The above review of Bourdieu's theory and Wacquant's application lead me to ask three questions. Each of these questions will be explored in the next chapter as I briefly review the literature on imprisonment and release. My questions are:

1. What is the capital worth of incoming prisoners?
2. Does imprisonment impact the distribution of capital?
3. Does the prison impact habitus?

My first question is a unique way to ask, "Who goes to prison?" When reflecting on Bourdieu's discussion of capital and Wacquant's discussion of hyperincarceration, it seems reasonable to argue that incoming prisoners are low in capital. However, a more detailed exploration of this intuition must be explored. This question is of course equipped with sub questions addressing the species of capital. What is the economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital of incoming prisoners?

In some respects, the first question may be re-phrased "Does inequality impact imprisonment practices?" and the second question may be re-phrased "Do imprisonment patterns impact inequality?" After identifying the capital worth of

incoming prisoners, it is necessary to explore the potential impact imprisonment has on the distribution of capital across American hierarchy. On the one hand, this requires an inquiry in to the capital worth of those held behind bars and an analysis of whether or not their capital erodes, stabilizes, or increases. On the other hand, this requires an inquiry into the capital worth, and potential fluctuations in that worth, of those associated directly or indirectly with the incarcerated. In other words, do imprisonment patterns influence the capital worth of families, neighborhoods, demographic groups, and other (quasi-)collectives?

The third question, regarding habitus, aims to explore if and how the prison influences disposition. When thinking of the prison as a secondary site of socialization, with experiences that (at least somewhat) run in synch (to use Sallaz 2010's words) with one's overall experience in America's social hierarchy, it is important to explore how conditions of imprisonment impact one's internalized social being. By analyzing the effects of habitus, I can re-phrase this question to ask, "How does the prison impact an individual's thoughts, actions, and perceptions?"

Together these questions aim to advance sociological theory and organize the remainder of this thesis. In the following chapter I turn to the literature on imprisonment and release to explore these questions, before I review my strategies for answering my empirical questions in the fourth chapter. The fifth and sixth chapters will consider the implications of both my theoretical and empirical questions.

## Conclusion

In summary, Bourdieu provides an effective strategy for unraveling many of the complex knots of the social world. His relational method and thinking tools allow for structured, yet flexible, inquiries into phenomena of varying scope. Wacquant both borrows from Bourdieu to explore incarceration practices in America, and advances his own topic-specific theoretical notions, such as prisonfare and law-and-order pornography, to make sense of the relational forces fueling hyperincarceration. My review of these authors lead me to ask three theoretical questions that motivate both my literary and empirical investigations. This chapter, coupled with the next, may be understood as an exploration of the world soon-to-be-released prisoners live.



### **CHAPTER III: IMPRISONMENT, RELEASE, AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY**

This three-part chapter addresses the theoretical questions presented earlier by reviewing a pool of literature on imprisonment and release. This may be understood as a theory advancing literature review, as I use Bourdieu's thinking tools as a thematic compass. In the first section, I review the entrance patterns of prisons (i.e., the social profile of the American prisoner) and suggest that the criminal justice system disproportionately recruits from groups low in capital for prison admission. The second section considers the impact prisons have on the capital worth of individuals, collectives, and quasi-collectives and the habituses of those who enter and exit state and federal prisons. In the third and final section, I outline the primary struggles faced by the recently released prisoner in America (typically male), namely with respect to his barriers in accessing employment and permanent housing. I postulate that his low capital worth and prison-adjusted habitus may prevent him from successful (re)integration.

#### **Dragnet: Recruiting Individuals and Groups Low in Capital**

As noted in Chapter I, there are approximately two-and-a-half million people incarcerated in America, of which over one-and-a-half million are housed in state or federal prisons (West et al. 2010). The millions of prisoners locked in cells and dormitories throughout the nation are in several respects an unrepresentative sample of the U.S. adult population. America's prisoners are much more likely to be male, poor, and non-white (Austin 2004; West et al. 2010; Wheelock and Uggen 2008; Potter 2004;

Western 2006). Prisoners often hail from so-called “socially disorganized” neighborhoods (Clear 2007; Rose and Clear 1998; Travis 2005:296-9) and are largely undereducated in comparison to the general population (Western 2006:110; Petersilia 2003:4; Pettit and Western 2004). Bourdieu’s notion of capital works well as an organizing principle to make sense of the American prisoner’s social profile. Prisons, as well as jails, disproportionately house men low in economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital.

*Economic Capital:*

Prisons typically harbor people low in economic capital. When speaking of social inequality and punishment, most scholars immediately note that prisons are occupied largely by the poor (e.g., Western 2006;2002; Irwin 1970;2005; Wakefield and Uggen 2010; Austin 2004; Pettit and Western 2004; Clear 2007; Travis 2005). Populations with the highest jobless rates, particularly inner city African American men, experienced the greatest increase in incarceration rates during the rapid growth of U.S. incarceration (Western 2006:78). Austin (2004) notes that during this 30-year period (circa the last three decades of the twentieth century), prisons filled with groups with the least economic power in America. This includes those who are pushed into the “informal” or “underground” economy of the streets, which sociologists of the inner city (e.g., Wilson 1987 and Anderson 1999) often highlight.

While it is valid to categorize most incoming prisoners as “poor” or “extremely poor,” as most were either jobless or held low-wage employment at their most recent arrest (Austin 2004), it is inappropriate to conclude that these men have nothing to

lose. Rather, it is safe to assume that many incoming prisoners have “some money,” potentially from criminal activity, but also legitimately, at the point of their last arrest. During such arrests, Travis (2005:157) notes that most (roughly two-thirds) of prisoners were working in the formal economy.<sup>16</sup> Most of these employed pre-prisoners, however, were working “low-paying” and “low-quality” jobs (Wakefield and Uggen 2010:395). Thus, incoming prisoners are low in, but are not without at least minimal amounts of, economic capital.

*Social Capital:*

People entering prison are typically low in social capital. In general, criminals are said to have weak connections to their families (Sampson and Laub 2003). Specifically, men entering the prison are less likely than men in the general population to be married (Western 2006:136). Also, prisons often hold residents from what are typically deemed “socially disorganized” neighborhoods, or in other words, neighborhoods low in informal social control (i.e., “social forces that produce compliance with community norms but are not derived from state power,” such as integrative norms promoted and maintained by family, peers, or civil society) and high in formal social control (e.g., police and other norm compliant forces provided by the state) (Travis 2005:297; Rose and Clear 1998).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Petersilia (2003:4) highlights that one-third of prisoners were unemployed during their most recent arrest, and thus the remaining two-thirds were employed at least part-time.

<sup>17</sup> Here, I run into a minor conceptual conflict between the ideas highlighted in the previous chapter and those summarized here. Wacquant (2008b) explicitly warns against framing neighborhoods, specifically hyperghettos, as “socially disorganized,” as he argues that this terminology is “moralizing.” Such neighborhoods are not disorganized for Wacquant (2008b:50), but are instead organized differently in response to “the relentless press of economic necessity, generalized social insecurity, abiding racial

Similar to economic capital, however, there is evidence that incoming prisoners have some social capital. Even for those incoming prisoners who are not married, there is evidence that they have extra-nuclear family connections (Western 2006:163). Also, Western (2006:137) highlights that fatherhood rates between men in prison and men outside of prison are nearly identical.

While many prisoners may have held multiple connections via their neighborhood and place of employment before their incarceration, these connections most likely had little to no “exchange power” with respect to the other species of capital. Wilson (1987:60), in his account of the “truly disadvantaged,” notes that residents of inner city ghettos, and by relation the high incarceration neighborhoods identified by Clear (2007), are highly isolated from individuals and institutions of mainstream society. Wilson (1987:60) continues by noting that inner city residents’ are generally disconnected from the job network. This suggests bonds built within poor neighborhoods, families, schools, or other overlapping institutions have low capital value because they cannot be exchanged for high levels of the other species of capital. For example, a social bond within a poor neighborhood may lead to low wage employment (exchange for low economic capital) but will most likely never lead to high wage employment (exchange for high economic capital).

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hostility or indifference, and political denigration.” In a sense, Wacquant (2008) argues that the phrase “social disorganization” is a form of symbolic violence imposed on specific neighborhoods by academe. Nevertheless, I employ the term as it pertains to the discussion held by Travis (2005), Clear (2007) and Rose and Clear (1998), in an attempt to stick close to the literature presented in this chapter.

### *Cultural Capital:*

Those entering prison are generally low in cultural capital. This is evident with studies analyzing the education levels of prisoners. Roughly 60 percent of prisoners have a GED (General Educational Development) or high school diploma, in comparison to 85 percent of the adult population in the U.S. (Petersilia 2003:4). Prisoners also score much lower on standardized tests (e.g., the Armed Forces Qualification Test) than the general population (Western 2006:110). Perhaps the most convincing evidence of low cultural capital among prisoners stems from analyses of literacy, which I suggested in the previous chapter is one of the most basic forms of embodied cultural capital. According to Rubinstein (2001), nearly a fifth (19 percent) of state prisoners are completely illiterate and almost half (40 percent) are functionally illiterate, in comparison to the general population, which is estimated to be four percent completely illiterate and 21 percent functionally illiterate.

### *Symbolic Capital and Reputability:*

Lastly, incarceration literature provides evidence for the prison population being low in symbolic capital (recall in Chapter II that I linked this term to discussions of honor and prestige). This is obvious as low levels of formal education among incoming prisoners also imply low levels of institutional cultural capital (e.g. credentials). College credentials, specifically bachelor's degrees, hold high symbolic value in a deindustrialized economy. Pettit and Western (2004:152) note that prisoners "average less than 12 years of completed schooling," leaving few with college credentials.

Also relevant for a discussion of symbolic capital, and symbolic power in general, are Irwin's (1985) notion of (dis)reputability and Weber's (1963) notion of (dis)honor. Individuals and groups who lack reputability or status, and thus in many respects those who are low in symbolic capital, are incarcerated at higher rates. Consider the racial disparities in the prison population. This pattern cannot fully be explained by blacks' disproportionate involvement in crime. There exist "significant gaps" between self-report surveys and the arrest statistics on the race of criminal offenders, with the former painting a picture that is much whiter than the latter (Wakefield and Uggen 2010:391). Black non-Hispanic men are imprisoned at a rate that is six times higher than white non-Hispanic men, 3,119 and 387 per 100,000 U.S. residents respectively (West et al. 2010).

Several scholars have pointed to shared stereotypes and fears of the poor and racial minorities (specifically African Americans) as an important variable motivating their overrepresentation in American prisons. For example, in his discussion of America's growing fear of crime during a period of crime reduction, Parenti (1999:6-7;60) notes that this fear targets urban African American men who hold little power in the political economy and who are often stereotyped as "Willie Hortons" (i.e., unpredictably violent). Controlling images of the poor and racial minorities permeate American collective consciousness and stabilize the ethnoracial hierarchy discussed by Wacquant (2009;2008a). Disreputable populations, to use Irwin's (1985) words, or dishonorable populations lacking legitimacy, to borrow Weber's (1963) language, are disproportionately represented in American prisons.

### *Hyperincarceration and The Losers of Neoliberalism:*

It is fair to conclude that prisons disproportionately house people low in capital. It is imperative to highlight, however, that each example presented above, although organized by different sub concepts of capital, generally represent the same group. This group is poor-urban-men, often of color.

Western's (2006) discussion of "the great economic losers" sheds light on this connection. During neoliberal economic reconstruction in the late twentieth-century (e.g., deindustrialization and outsourcing), those most affected by labor market revisions were those low in cultural capital. America's gutted blue collar industry and expanding white collar industry pushed those with only, or less than, a high school education (low cultural capital) into the periphery of the labor market and further into poverty (declining economic capital) (Western 2006:56). These losers of neoliberalism fill U.S. prisons.

### **Impacts of Imprisonment: Capital Erosion and Habitus Adjustment**

Not only are those who enter the prison low in capital, as most are poor, undereducated, and from socially disorganized communities, in several respects, prisons also drain these men's capital worth. The average U.S. prisoner spends 29 months in prison after five months in jail (Petersilia 2003:93). During incarceration, prisoners are limited in their ability to maintain their pre-prison capital worth and are given few opportunities to acquire new capital. In this regard, imprisonment reduces existing capital and incapacitates individuals from acquiring new capital. This erosion of capital is

not limited to the individual, as there is strong evidence to suggest that prisons also drain the capital worth of prisoners' families and communities.

*Economic Capital:*

Literature suggests that while inside prison, the economic capital prisoners had prior to their incarceration erodes. While there is little data on the amount of money and wealth a prisoner has at the time of entrance to prison versus the amount of money and wealth he has at the point of release, there are two reasons to believe that, for most prisoners, it is lower at the point of release. First, there are essentially no opportunities to accumulate economic capital from behind bars (at least legitimately). The average minimum hourly wage in a state prison is \$0.89 and the average maximum is \$2.93 (Pryor 2005). This surely produces a lower income than what most prisoners were making outside of prison given that roughly two-thirds held at least part time employment at the time of arrest (Travis 2005:157) and the federal minimum wage is presently \$7.25 an hour (U.S. Department of Labor 2011). Second, a prisoner's debt (e.g., child support and court fees) may grow during incarceration (Wakefield and Uggen 2010). Following imprisonment, these men are likely to have less money than before their incarceration and they may face a higher amount of debt.

For families in or near poverty, the removal of a wage earning family member to imprisonment, even when such an income is low, likely exacerbates their hardship (Travis 2005:126). Removing these low-wage "breadwinners" from the market likely pushes their overall household income further into, or towards, poverty. Following their



typical 29 months of imprisonment, those men returning to their families can expect to enter a household with less money and wealth than when they left.

There is also evidence of long-term economic decline for people who enter and exit prison. Following release, former prisoners struggle to gain or regain position in the economy. Coming from a life course perspective, Western (2006:109,190) notes that ex-cons become outsiders to the primary labor market (i.e., those positions commonly referred to as “careers”) and instead find themselves barricaded in unstable positions of the secondary labor market (i.e., those positions commonly referred to as “jobs”).

Western (2006) highlights this effect by framing incarceration as,

a key life event that triggers a cumulative spiral of disadvantage. Incarceration reduces not just the level of wages, it also slows wage growth over the life course and restricts the kinds of jobs that former inmates might find. Incarceration redirects the life path from the usual trajectory of steady jobs with career ladders that normally propels wage growth for young men. Men tangled in the justice system become permanent labor market outsiders, finding only temporary or unreliable jobs that offer little economic stability. (P. 109)

Hyperincarceration also drains economic capital within those urban spaces with high concentrations of imprisonment. Clear (2007:110-11), for example, notes that while incarceration rates have no direct effect on the value of residential property, it may have an indirect effect when high levels of imprisonment and release within a given neighborhood influences the crime rate in that space to rise. Clear (2007:111) suggests “if the effect of incarceration rates at the high end do not reduce crime, but rather increase it, the net effect is to reduce housing values if increased crime is the result of

incarceration's effect on neighborhood stability." Prisons may also reduce the overall wealth of these communities by incarcerating high numbers of wage earners, similar to how imprisonment may negatively influence the economic capital of a particular household or family by incapacitating breadwinners.

*Social Capital:*

Social capital also erodes as a consequence to imprisonment. Not only are prisoners physically removed from the daily lives of their family and friends, they face many obstacles in maintaining such bonds from behind bars. Consider a man's familial role. Western (2006:5;134) argues that beyond incapacitating convicted felons from victimizing free citizens, prisons and jails incapacitate these men from performing the pro-social roles of spouse and father. With prisons typically located in remote areas and prison phone calls often costing \$1 to \$3 per minute, regular contact between incarcerated men and their family and friends on the outside becomes burdensome (Western 2006:44-6). Also, for those few men who enter prison as husbands, their marriage will likely fail during their time behind bars (Western 2006:163). Once a prisoner is released, he is likely to have less social capital than before he entered prison, particularly with respect to the "pro-social bonds" correctional officials often speak of.

While it is true that prisoners typically build social connections behind bars, some of which may sustain beyond time served, such occurrences should not be considered a form of social capital building. This is not to say that friendships and acquaintances behind bars do not have some resourceful advantage. Ross and Richards (2002:69) highlight several advantages to having friends in prison, including information

sharing about prisoner-prisoner and prisoner-guard politics, which may be essential for avoiding unnecessary danger inside prison. However, in terms of social capital that may aid (re)integration into economic, social, and civic society following release, such prison-built ties may act as a barrier. Visser and Travis (2003) highlight the double-edged sword of peer networks for recently released prisoners,

Peer networks in prison and relationships with substance abusing and criminal peers in the community may promote postrelease offending, whereas supportive peers who do not engage in crime and drug abuse may prevent reoffending. Families may provide strong support systems for returning prisoners, they may facilitate or enable continued offending or substance-abuse behaviors, or they may be victims of the returning prisoners and want nothing to do with them upon release. P. 91

At the point of release, a prisoner may lack the social resources necessary, or at least important, for criminal desistance. Western (2006:5) notes that social bonds, especially marriage and family bonds, significantly aid criminally active men's transition to a conformed lifestyle. Similarly, Petersilia (2003:41) suggests a positive causal relationship between maintaining pro-social family bonds during imprisonment and post-prison success. However, returning to one's family after prison may be challenging after imprisonment has weakened such relationships. Western (2006:163) highlights this erosion by noting that there is a clear rise in domestic violence for ex-prisoners.

Incarceration may not only reduce social capital for incarcerates but also for their families and communities. In their discussion of "coercive mobility," Clear and colleagues extend Shaw and McKay's (1942) hypothesis that neighborhood level social disorganization produces conditions favorable to criminal activity such as: low levels of

informal control, high levels of ethnic heterogeneity (and thus low moral consent), and high rates of residential mobility (i.e., high turnover rate of residents). This latter example, high mobility rates, decreases social organization by reducing opportunities for community members to build inter-neighbor bonds (and thus informal social control) and promotes isolation and anonymity. Clear (2007) argues that incarceration produces a form of forced, or “coerced,” mobility as it pulls high numbers of men out of specific neighborhoods. Not only does this increase residential turnover rates for men being sent to prison, but it may also increase the residential mobility of their families as the increased economic hardship of having a loved-one in prison forces many families to move (Clear 2007:74).<sup>18</sup>

Clear (2007) highlights the impact of high incarceration rates on social networks,

As a form of residential mobility, incarceration disrupts social networks in a variety of ways. Some are straightforward: incarceration removes people from their family members and friends. Some are more complex: relationships are strained when residents withdraw from community life to cope with financial problems or to manage stigma (of having a loved one incarcerated). P. 74 (parenthesis added).

#### *Cultural Capital:*

There is evidence to suggest that prisons drain cultural capital of prisoners.

Consider labor market skills. On the one hand, imprisonment may weaken these already limited labor market skills by *pulling* individuals out of the labor market, consequently

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<sup>18</sup> Incarceration only tells half of the story of coercive mobility. Clear (2007) also highlights how high levels of prison release concentrated in particular urban spaces works to further destabilize disorganized neighborhoods by increasing residential mobility, particularly for repeat incarcerates who routinely move from neighborhood to prison.

preventing the acquisition and development of said skills. On the other hand, imprisonment may weaken these skills by *pushing* individuals into an environment where the skills necessary for survival run inconsistent with those that are advantageous in the labor market (Western 2002:528; Pager 2007:31). While out of touch with free world labor, and the free world in general, prisoners' technical and interpersonal skills may erode and their work ethic decline.

Conversely, there is also evidence to suggest that cultural capital may increase behind bars. Petersilia (2003:93) notes that roughly a third of all released prisoners will have received some form of vocational or educational training in prison. Assuming that such programs have some effectiveness in teaching or training prisoners, and there is strong evidence to suggest that they do when implemented appropriately, then prisons may invest cultural capital within individuals (Petersilia 2003:176).<sup>19</sup> However, the positive impact of such programs is limited primarily due to a lack of funding and resources (Irwin 2005:74-5). Additionally, Petersilia (2003:33) notes that while the number of former prisoners beginning parole with a GED or a high school diploma has increased since 1990, the number of entrants with "some college" has declined

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<sup>19</sup> In-prison programing, and rehabilitative efforts for criminal offenders in general, is a complicated topic that is not without controversy. Penologists in opposition to programing occasionally point to a meta-analysis study conducted by Lipton et al. (1975) analyzing rehabilitative programs in the middle of the twentieth-century and their famous conclusion that "nothing works" (i.e., all rehabilitative programs fail at reforming criminal behavior). However, Petersilia (2003:175-9) briefly reviews prison programing research and meta-analyses on the same topic and concludes that the following five programs are effective in terms of reducing recidivism and/or increasing employment following release: academic skills training, vocational skills training, cognitive skills programs, sex-offender interventions, and drug abuse treatment.

significantly.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, in some regard, it is possible that an individual may leave prison with additional cultural capital as a result of effective programming, suggesting that prison may not erode cultural capital to the extent that it does for economic or social capital. However, such programs need to work, and as suggested by Irwin (2005), vocational and educational training in prison often lack the tools necessary to be effective. Even if the notion of capital erosion is not fully applicable to cultural capital, such an increase is likely small (e.g., high school dropout to GED recipient), and thus it is still fair to assume that most prisoners leave prison with low levels of cultural capital.

*Symbolic Capital and Reputability:*

In addition to leaving prison with low levels of economic, social, and cultural capital, exiting prisoners enter the free world with poor levels of reputability, a clear form of symbolic capital. In the previous section, I suggested that hegemonic notions of the poor, the non-white, the urban, and specifically men who fit all of these profiles (e.g., the poor black urban man) are seen as particularly dangerous, and that this fear promotes, and is promoted by, controlling images (e.g., “Willie Hortons”). Those who meet these profiles, and therefore lack reputability in a class and racial hierarchy, find themselves filling U.S. prisons. Similar to how prisons exacerbate low levels of economic and social power for individuals and communities, prisons also worsen low levels of

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<sup>20</sup> Petersilia (2003:33) suggests that the decline in college education programs for prisoners is likely due to congressional provision of federal Pell grants in 1994, which eliminated prisoners from receiving such funding. This, according to Petersilia (2003), was motivated by a political climate favoring the “principle of least eligibility,” which is a classical argument that suggests, in a society with limited social resources, criminal offenders are the least deserving.

reputability. The reputations of prisoners, as well as the reputation of their families and communities, are damaged, or in other words reduced, by imprisonment.

Clear (2007:126) argues that prisons can reduce the reputability for individuals, families, and communities, thus causing negative economic effects,

It is clear that being convicted of a crime and sent to prison carries a stigma, and being a criminal can become a person's master status. This alters the way people think about themselves and the way they are treated by residents in the community and by the broader society...Stigma sometimes also gets transferred to family members of incarcerated individuals. When communities send large numbers of residents to prison, stigma can also become attached to the community at-large. For instance, stigma is the primary reason residents think people with criminal records cannot get jobs, but it also affects the ability of law-abiding residents to get jobs when businesses do not locate in these neighborhoods because of the stigma of criminal activity is attached to the area. P. 125-6

At an individual level, prisons reduce reputability in three primary ways. First, individuals leave prison with a clear mark of negative state representation, the criminal record. Pager (2007) describes this as a "negative credential."<sup>21</sup> Unlike (positive) credentials, which enable opportunities for upward mobility, negative credentials restrict such opportunities across "numerous social, economic, and political domains" (Pager 2007:4-5;32-3). Second, an ex-prisoner's reputation is damaged in an informal manner. Recently released prisoners often report a sense of feeling negatively judged by others and informally labeled as "bad" (Rose and Clear 2003:326). Irwin (1970:137-8)

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<sup>21</sup> Pager (2007:33) highlights other negative credentials as well, including, but not limited to: "those dishonorably discharged from the military, mental patients, and deportees."

refers to this as “informal stigma.” Lastly, time spent in prison punches a hole in an individual’s employment history (Raphael 2007). Pager (2007:31) suggests that this disadvantages former prisoners in the labor market relative to their “same-age nonincarcerated peers.” Thus, an individual released from prison will likely enter the free world with less reputability than what he had before his initial imprisonment (e.g., going from poor-black to poor-black-felon).

Prisons also drain reputability at the shared levels of family, neighborhood, and demographic group. For example, at the level of family, Travis and Waul (2003:16) note that children of prisoners experience stigma among their peers, teachers, and family members. Additionally, Clear (2007:126) notes that neighborhoods with high incarceration and release rates often experience a tarnishing in their reputation as livable urban spaces. At a demographic level, when specific groups, such as African American men, are overrepresented in the prison and parole population, the stereotypes that such people are dangerous criminals are reinforced, consequently strengthening controlling images.<sup>22</sup>

#### *Imprisonment and Habitus:*

There is also evidence to suggest that the environment of prisons may adjust the habituses of prisoners. Sociologists have historically recognized prisons as spaces structured by formal and informal order, with the former maintained by state managers

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<sup>22</sup> Pager (2007:102), for example, argues that blacks with criminal records face increased barriers to labor market access than whites with criminal records because, in general, blacks are stereotyped as more criminal than whites.



and the latter maintained by an “inmate code” (Ohlin 1956; Clemmer 1958).<sup>23</sup> Within this dual-ordered environment, prisoners consciously and subconsciously adjust their dispositions in order to survive a world policed by two groups Goffman (1961) titles “managers” and “inmates.”<sup>24</sup> In order to survive prison, prisoners must learn to live with the conditions of both of these orders. In terms of formal order, this means incoming prisoners must adjust to deprivations of liberty and privacy. In terms of informal order, this means adapting to a complex system of prisoner rules and processes. In several respects, the prisoner lifestyle does not match the lifestyle of the integrated individual of the free world. At the point of release, a prisoner may feel out of touch with the world outside because his habitus has been adjusted.

Haney (2003) highlights many of the psychological impacts absorbed by a typical prisoner. In adjusting to the formal order of the prison, such as the deprivation of liberty, some prisoners may develop a dependency on “institutional structure and contingencies” (Haney 2003:40-1). Also, due to both the formal order’s deprivation of privacy and the informal order’s risk of inmate-on-inmate victimization, prisoners often

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<sup>23</sup> Above all, formal prison order works to contain prisoner bodies (i.e., guarantee their isolation from the free world) and promote docility. Clemmer (1958:183) notes that with the exception of ordinances regarding institutional cleanliness, “the basic thought in every rule is to prevent riots and escapes.” Prisons are also socially structured by an “informal prison organization” and “prison culture” (Clemmer 1958:107-8,294-5). In his early analysis of the American prison, Ohlin (1956:18) states, “It is impossible to understand fully the operation of the penal system unless an adequate appraisal is made of the informal system of organization existing among the inmates.” A rigorous and complex network of guidelines for prisoner social behavior, the prisoner “culture” or “code,” is an essential cog within the order of prison life. A particular system of norms, values, and physical items are shared and passed generationally from prisoner to prisoner.

<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Ohlin (1956:27) divides actors of the penitentiary into two major classes: the “custodians” and “those in custody.”

become hypervigilant, distrustful of people, and highly suspicious (Haney 2003:41).<sup>25</sup>

Haney (2003) also highlights other psychological impacts, including: “emotional overcontrol,” “alienation,” “social withdrawal,” “diminished sense of self-worth and personal value,” and “posttraumatic stress reactions to the pains of imprisonment.” In this regard, prisons appear to be spaces that promote anti-social cognition. This sheds light on the internal impacts of imprisonment and suggests consequential changes in thoughts, perceptions, and action.

At the point of release, the conditions of imprisonment may be embodied within the prisoner and adaptation to the “streets” may be difficult, if not impossible, according to Irwin (1970);

The ex-convict moves from a state of incarceration where the pace is slow and routinized, the events are monotonous but familiar, into a chaotic and foreign outside world. The cars, buses, people, buildings, roads, stores, lights, noises, and animals are things he hasn’t experienced at firsthand for quite some time. The most ordinary transactions of the civilian have dropped from his repertoire of automatic maneuvers...Talking to people whose accent, style of speech, gestures, and vocabulary are slightly different is difficult. The entire stimulus world – the sights, sounds, and smells – is strange. P. 113-4<sup>26</sup>

Not only is it common for a recently released prisoner to feel out of place in terms of the taken-for-granted events of the free world, his dispositions may have been adjusted in a manner that restricts his (re)integration. Western (2006:113) notes that

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<sup>25</sup> This is not surprising when violence against men is estimated to be 18 times higher inside prison than in the general population (Wolff et al. 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Writing 35 years later, Irwin (2005:174) notes that such feelings of disorganization following release are dependent on time incarcerated, how many times the individual has been released from prison, and whether or not the individual is returning to a community with high levels of incarceration.

the behaviors necessary for prison adaptation (e.g., suspiciousness, aggressiveness, and social withdraw) are “inconsistent with work routines” of the free world. Similarly, in her suggestion that prisons limit employment opportunities by means of changing, or “transforming,” prisoners into less employable people, Pager (2007:31) notes that prisons pull men from the routines of labor.<sup>27</sup> This suggests that the prison acts as a secondary site of socialization, to use Sallaz’s (2010) words, that molds an individual’s habitus, similar to other sites such as the labor market and higher education. However, unlike time spent in college or at a place of employment, time served in prison appears to have a disintegrative effect. This is evident not only by losing social bonds while incarcerated, but also by adjusting perceptions, thoughts, and actions in manner that is beneficial for prison life, but is counterintuitive to adopting the life of an integrated free world citizen.

### **Challenges of (Re)Integration: The Case of Money and Shelter**

#### *Understanding (Re)Integration in the Era of Hyper-Release:*

The era of hyperincarceration may also be understood as the era of hyper-release. Approximately 95 percent of all U.S. prisoners are scheduled to be released at some point in their lives (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2008; Slevin 2000). In 2009 specifically, 729,295 prisoners were released in America, slightly fewer than the number

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<sup>27</sup> Pager (2007:31-2) provides three core explanation categories for ex-prisoners’ struggles with accessing the formal labor market: Selection (“The kinds of people who wind up in prison don’t really want to work, or don’t have sufficient skills to find a job.”); Transformation (“The experience of prison changes inmates in ways that make them less suited for the formal labor market.”); and Credentialing (“The stigma of incarceration imposes barriers to finding employment.”).

of people entered prison that same year (730,860) (West et al. 2010). In other words, roughly 2,000 state and federal prisoners are released daily.

As noted in Chapter I, Petersilia (2009:545) suggests, at the point of release, most prisoners have an authentic desire to “succeed” in transitioning from prison to the free world. Most attempts to successfully (re)integrate, however, appear to be unsuccessful. Studies estimate that roughly two-thirds of released prisoners in the U.S. will be re-arrested in three years and about half will be back in prison (Langan and Levin 2002).<sup>28</sup> When comparing recidivism with community (re)integration, the former is clearly winning at the national level.

While notions of ex-prisoner success are fairly subjective, two critical markers of integration, legal housing and stable employment in the formal economy, may be generalized as “goals” for a majority, if not all, of prisoners approaching release (Taxman et al. 2002).<sup>29</sup> However, multiple factors hinder an ex-prisoner’s chances of securing housing and employment. Petersilia (2003) highlights many of these barriers to (re)integration, including the stigma of a criminal record, chemical addiction, surveillance-oriented parole, and ex-prisoners’ general lack of social, linguistic, and economic resources.

Shelter and income are clearly necessary for an integrated life; however, which comes first? A chicken-or-the-egg question arises when thinking about the processes of

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<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, over 60 percent of the prison population is serving their second or higher incarceration sentence (Siegel 2009:548).

<sup>29</sup> This is not to say that housing and employment are exhaustive goals of soon-to-be-released or recently released prisoners. Often, these men list goals of repositioning themselves within their families and avoiding drugs and alcohol; however, Taxman et al. (2002) list shelter and employment as the immediate “plan” adopted by prisoners and promoted by transitional aides (e.g., in-prison release programing).

securing housing and employment. Money and “proof of income” are standard admission criteria for property rentals. At the same time, in several respects, shelter is necessary to secure a job (e.g., address for contact information and a place to prepare for job interviews). When considering these primary goals of housing and employment, most academics and correctional professionals generally agree that housing is a more immediate need than employment (Petersilia 2003:8; Travis 2005:219). For this reason, released prisoners tend to seek temporary shelter immediately after release, most from family, and the rest from friends, secular or non-secular transitional housing, or homeless shelters (Taxman et al. 2002; Petersilia 2003:121; Travis 2005:220).<sup>30</sup> Following their settlement in immediate shelter, many recently released prisoners tend to seek employment and more permanent housing arrangements.

Bourdieu’s thinking tools have practical implications for the topic of prison release, and in particular the ex-prisoner’s hunt for temporary shelter, permanent housing, and stable employment. As prisoners exit the world of incarceration they are expected to secure housing and employment while avoiding criminal activity and parole violations. However, a released prisoner is typically low in the capital necessary to secure housing and employment. Also, his habitus may restrict his access to these same domains.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Homelessness is a growing problem for released prisoners. Both Travis (2005:222) and Petersilia (2003:120-3) note that a significant number of released prisoners (“perhaps one in nine” according to Travis) end up in a homeless shelter sometime following their incarceration.

<sup>31</sup> Bourdieu’s notion of field is applicable to the topic of prison release as well. In most cases, prisoner release may be understood as movement in the bureaucratic field, and successful (re)integration may be understood as (re)admission into the economic field. Upon release, a prisoner typically graduates to parolee, thus shifting his position in the criminal justice wing. Even those prisoners released without

*After Erosion and Adjustment: Barriers to Employment and Housing:*

As emphasized earlier in this chapter, exiting prisoners are low in economic capital. Although many states in the U.S. (roughly two-thirds) offer “gate money” to those prisoners being released with little to no money “on their books” (i.e., individual inmate accounts sustained by prison labor and/or deposits from family or friends outside of prison), such funds generally range from \$25 to \$200 per recipient (Petersilia 2003:7; Taxman et al. 2002; Travis 2005:223). Even for those prisoners released with a couple hundred dollars, securing permanent housing is still out of budget as most property rentals require security deposits and first and last month’s rent at the point of signing a rental agreement (Travis 2005:223). Also, recently released prisoners may lack the economic capital necessary for a successful job hunt, such as having money to purchase interview clothes or transportation money to meet potential employers.<sup>32</sup>

Having little social capital at the point of release is also problematic when considering that family and friends may act as critical aides in an ex-prisoner’s hunt for employment and housing. As noted earlier, familial social capital is often exchanged for

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parole experience continued state panopticism in the form of the criminal record; the obvious exceptions here are those prisoners who are exonerated. In several respects, successful (re)integration may also be understood as successfully (re)entering the labor market. Criminologists often point to stable employment as a pathway to desistance (e.g., Uggen 2000), and integrated men are often defined by their position in the economy, and more specifically their profession. Both access to this sector of the economic field and successful navigation of parole are dependent on an ex-prisoner’s capital and habitus.

<sup>32</sup> Transportation is not only an economic issue (e.g., expenditures on vehicle purchase, gas, and public transportation passes), but is also an issue of place. Similar to how Clear (2007:125-6) notes that negative neighborhood reputations caused by high concentrations of incarceration, parole, and crime may drive businesses out of the neighborhood (consequently reducing job opportunities within that space), Pager (2007) highlights a discrepancy between the spaces where job growth occurs and the spaces where many job seekers reside. She notes that in recent years entry-level employment opportunities have disproportionately emerged in suburban areas and states, “many suburban employers are located far from any form of public transportation, further limiting access for disadvantaged populations” (Pager 2007:163).

temporary housing (Taxman et al. 2002; Petersilia 2003:121; Travis 2005:220).<sup>33</sup>

However, if one's social capital has undergone erosion as a result of incarceration, opportunities for exchanging social capital for housing, specifically permanent housing, are likely limited. Parole conditions tend to restrict parolees from living or associating with individuals with felony records, which may include family and friends willing to provide shelter (Petersilia 2003:121). A lack of social capital is also problematic during the job hunt. Travis (2005:164) suggests that family, friends, and community networks are more important job-seeking resources than parole agency recommendations to specific employers. However, if incarceration erodes social capital, such opportunities are reduced.

A general lack of cultural capital also acts as a barrier for released prisoners. Challenges in interpreting written language, for example, are obvious barriers in the hunt for employment and housing. Reading and writing are necessary for completing applications to even for the most unskilled jobs and cheapest rentals. Also, communicating in a "professional" manner during a job interview is reasonably difficult for men exiting a social climate structured by slang (Irwin 1970). These struggles are exacerbated by the fact that most exiting prisoners are not formally educated beyond "some high school" or high school "equivalency" (i.e., GED) and are thus low in the institutionalized state of cultural capital, thus putting them at a disadvantage in a

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<sup>33</sup> While it is common practice for a released prisoner to live with a family member immediately following their exit from prison, such living conditions may actually restrict successful (re)integration. A released prisoner may become too dependent on their loved-one, potentially barricading them from gaining the independence necessary for making it on their own (Travis 2005:121). Prisoners are often conscious of such issues. Some prisoners who choose to live in transitional housing do so to gain distance from their family (Taxman et al. 2002).

deindustrialized labor market (Petersilia 2003:32-3; Western 2006:111). Also, by being out of touch with the routines of free world labor, a released prisoner may have lost the skills necessary to keep a job if given the opportunity.

A released prisoner is also put at a disadvantage in the labor and property-rental market because he lacks symbolic capital. Many exiting prisoners lack the bureaucratic forms necessary for signing a rental agreement or filling out important tax information at the point of job hiring, such as a drivers license or a social security card (Petersilia 2003:115). The absence of these state-issued markers of legitimacy is coupled with a state-issued mark of dishonor. The criminal record acts as a “red flag” to employers and landlords who interpret the mark as an indicator of a dangerous and irresponsible applicant. In this respect, the criminal record may be understood as negative symbolic capital (or debt).

A released prisoners’ habitus, adjusted by the dual order of prison, may restrict him from (re)integrating. Those embodied techniques necessary for surviving in prison, such as hypervigilance and distrustfulness, may produce perceptions, thoughts, and actions that prevent access to employment and housing. A prisoner who’s body is conditioned to be hypervigilant and distrustful may hold his posture in a particular manner (e.g., back against the wall) and his eye motion may be trained to shift, keeping surveillance of immediate surroundings. Such “effects” of habitus may be interpreted by a landlord or employer as a sign of a poor tenant or employee. An ex-prisoner’s sense of place may also be adjusted. He may feel very uncomfortable through the entire process of searching for housing and employment (e.g., completing paperwork and interviews).



A sense of place biased towards to conditions of imprisonment may (sub)consciously deter a former prisoner from initiating or completing efforts to (re)integrate.

### Conclusion

This chapter turns to existing literature to answer the theoretical questions raised in Chapter II (“What is the capital worth of incoming prisoners?”, “Does imprisonment impact the distribution of capital?” and “Does the prison impact habitus?”) on the one hand, and to detail the world in which those who enter, and inevitably exit, prison live on the other hand. I argue that in general prisons both reflect existing patterns of inequality and worsen such patterns by eroding capital and adjusting habitus. The literature on imprisonment suggests that my notion of capital erosion is particularly applicable to economic and social capital. There is evidence, however, that cultural capital erosion does not hold true in all individual-level cases, particularly with respect to prison efforts deemed more “rehabilitative” (e.g. education programs). However, such efforts need to be effective, and with many programs presently underfunded, the investment of cultural capital is dim at best. Lastly, the research on the psychological impacts of incarceration suggest that the dual order of prisons may have lasting impacts on the thoughts, perceptions, and actions of prisoners. Compared to when he first arrived to prison, the released prisoner will likely have less capital and his prison-adjusted habitus may clash with the free world. Now that I have detailed the world and upcoming world of my research population (i.e., soon-to-be-released prisoners), the next two chapters detail my strategies for, and results from, studying this group at ground-level.

## CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

The following outlines my research goals and strategies. At the front-end of this chapter I suggest that ethnography is the best strategy for answering my empirical questions (“How do soon-to-be-released prisoners *understand* their upcoming release?” and “How do soon-to-be-released prisoners *prepare* for their upcoming release?”). Afterwards, I review general topics regarding my research, including population parameters, site selection, sampling, and data collection. Lastly, I review my framework for data analysis and suggest that a dual application of objective and subjective reasoning coincides with Bourdieu’s relational method.

### **Ethnographic Design**

To address my research questions, I completed a brief ethnography at Columbia River Correctional Institution (CRCI), a minimum-security men’s prison in Portland, Oregon. Ethnography is best understood as a data collection strategy in which an intact cultural group is examined in its natural setting for a prolonged period of time (Creswell 2009:13). Ethnographers typically employ a combination of interviews and observations for such an examination.

Interviewing is an ideal strategy for addressing my questions. Not only does interviewing yield large amounts of data quickly from one participant, it is also highly receptive to collecting data regarding participants’ perspectives and subjective viewpoints (Marshall and Rossman 2006:101-02). My research questions are fundamentally concerned with soon-to-be-released prisoners’ worldview and, according

to Patton (1987:109), the purpose of conducting interviews is to “enter” a studied population’s perspective. Interviewing is the best data collection strategy for exploring how prisoners understand their social climate and future.

Observation is also justified. Coupled with interviews, observations provide an opportunity to triangulate data. When combined, interviews and observations provide valuable insights for understanding the meaning that everyday activities hold for people (Marshall and Rossman 2006:102). Also, by observing the behaviors and interactions of soon-to-be-released prisoners, I have an opportunity to record valuable information that may routinely escape the conscious awareness of my participants (Patton 1987:73).

### **Population and Site Selection**

“Soon-to-be-released prisoners” is a somewhat fabricated group. Intuitively, it describes prisoners who are approaching their exit from prison (with or without parole). However, how soon is soon? One year? Six months? A week? After consulting with an ODOC administrator, I concluded that six months and under is an adequate threshold.

This parameter is justified primarily because of the site where I collected data. Once prisoners at CRCI reach their final six months (give or take a month), they are required to attend a mandatory “six month self-assessment” meeting. During these 25 to 35 minute meetings, groups of roughly 20 to 30 prisoners listen to a CRCI transitional staff member describe the resources that are exclusively available to prisoners serving their final six months. These men receive a single-page double-sided document (see Appendix A) that briefly reviews, among other services, a penitentiary program titled

“Road to Success,” which is a series of five courses (Employment, Your Family/Your Release, Working Effectively with Your P.O., Budget and Finance, and Housing) that address release issues.<sup>34</sup> The transitional staff member describes the program to prisoners attending the six month self-assessment meeting and explains additional non-course transitional services available to soon-to-be-released prisoners (e.g., food stamp applications, credit checks, and paperwork to receive proper identification through the Oregon DMV). Meeting participants are then given the opportunity to sign up for one, more, or none of the five Road to Success courses.<sup>35</sup>

I see this meeting as somewhat ritualistic to the processes of imprisonment and release for those men contained at CRCI. While it is almost certainly not as memorable, or impactful, as the rituals of intake (e.g., fingerprinting, body inspection, and the issuing of an identification number) or several other pre-release rituals (e.g. physically exiting the prison), it is nevertheless an experience shared by nearly all prisoners released from CRCI.<sup>36</sup> The six month assessment is a prescribed ritual for those CRCI prisoners approaching release.

Beyond this ritual, CRCI is an ideal location to study soon-to-be-released prisoners. It is often informally referred to as a “release prison” among ODOC staff and

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<sup>34</sup> The three additional classes listed under the “Road to Success Classes” category on the form (Flagging Class, Food Handlers Card, and Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University) are generally not considered part of the core Road to Success curriculum as outlined informally by transitional staff at CRCI. Instead, these three classes are more-or-less supplementary courses to the five core classes. For this reason, I do not address these three additional classes in my research.

<sup>35</sup> Further details regarding CRCI and the Road to Success program are provided in the next chapter as part of my observation findings.

<sup>36</sup> Although the six month assessment meeting is mandatory, I am reluctant to state that *all* prisoners attend the meeting, as there may be special circumstance in which a prisoner does not attend.

prisoners. This facility primarily houses prisoners who are scheduled to be released in less than four years to one of the three most populated counties in Oregon (Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas).<sup>37</sup> CRCI has a higher concentration of soon-to-be-released prisoners than any other ODOC prison. In December 2010 (my last month of data collection) roughly 39 percent of prisoners at CRCI were scheduled to be released within six months, accounting for roughly 11 percent of the total soon-to-be-released prison population under state custody in Oregon (ODOC 2010a). Thus, not only are population parameters justified by the practices of CRCI (i.e., the six-month assessment), my decision to choose CRCI as a site for data collection is justified by its high concentration of prisoners approaching release.

It is necessary to emphasize that there are limitations with CRCI as my chosen site. CRCI is a unique facility in Oregon and the nation, and in many ways it is not a representative sample of U.S. prisons. Out of the three primary security levels, minimum-security prisons are the least popular (roughly 20 percent of all U.S. state and federal prisons), and are overshadowed by medium and maximum-security prisons, which account for about a two-fifths and third of prisons respectively (Stephen 2008). Prisoners in Oregon are also whiter than the general U.S. prisoner population. Approximately 10 percent of Oregon prisoners are black, contrasted with 39 percent of the total state and federal prisoner population (ODOC 2010a; Ewert and Wildhagen 2011). The specific race composition at CRCI helps alleviate this polarization somewhat,

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<sup>37</sup> I spoke to several prisoners who were being released to other counties in Oregon, particularly those that border the three listed counties. Many of these men claimed that they were housed at CRCI for specific programming needs (e.g., drugs and alcohol programming).

as blacks account for nearly a quarter (23 percent) of the 600 or so prisoners at this facility (ODOC 2010a). CRCI is also unique in that it is reserved for prisoners serving less than four years or less than their final four years. Therefore, arguably every man housed in CRCI “sees light at the end of the tunnel” and the thought of release may occupy more of their time than it does for prisoners housed in other facilities. And while I face limitations with respect to site representation, and subsequently data transferability (explored in greater depth in Chapter VI), CRCI is arguably the best prison in Oregon to research soon-to-be-released prisoners.

## **Access**

A primary challenge of prison ethnography is access. Waldram (2009) outlines many of the access obstacles faced by prison ethnographers.<sup>38</sup> Most obvious, prison researchers of all methodologies must meet the approval of prison gatekeepers. Some prisons have their own research ethics panels and many are occupied by guards who may perceive an ethnographer as a security threat, given the intimate nature of the methodology (Waldram 2009).

In the months before data collection, I wrestled with this challenge of access. In addition to gaining approval from my university’s human subjects review board, I also sought approval from the ODOC Research and Evaluation Unit (REU). This involved both

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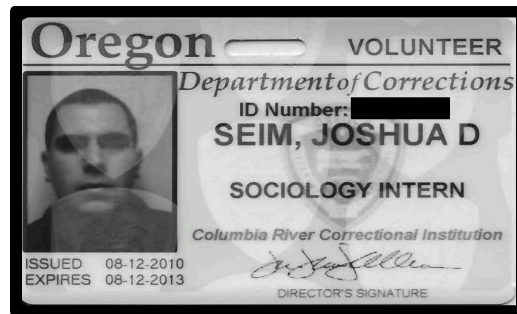
<sup>38</sup> Waldram (2009) does not limit his discussion to issues of access. He notes that there are also concerns within the academic community on whether or not it is reasonable to assume that prisoners provide honest information. Speaking from experience as a prison ethnographer, Waldram (2009) dismisses claims that prisoners are reluctant to provide valid data, and suggests an invalid claim that “all prisoners are liars” has unnecessarily dominated public and academic opinions of prisoners.

written and verbal negotiations between state officials and myself. This review process not only required me to convince ODOC administrators that I was reducing risks to research participants (e.g., by guaranteeing confidentiality), but it also required that I demonstrate my intention to use minimal amounts of ODOC resources. REU reasonably argued that my presence as an ethnographer may become burdensome as it would require me to continuously enter and exit a penitentiary, consequently consuming CRCI staff time (e.g., routinely reminding me about contraband rules, scanning me with a metal detector, and escorting me throughout the prison).

To alleviate this issue of ODOC resource burden, I was recommended by REU to secure an ODOC issued volunteer/intern identification badge, which would give me permission to access CRCI without going through the entrance protocol of “visitors.” Receiving such a badge took months and required me to complete numerous bureaucratic exercises. First, I completed several online training modules, after which I completed paper-based examinations that tested my knowledge of module material. These modules reviewed various rules and regulations general to ODOC prisons and specific to volunteers and interns. I mailed my exam responses with additional paperwork to the state’s capital. By completing one of these documents, I gave ODOC both permission and relevant information for checking my criminal history. Following paperwork processing, I was invited to attend a mandatory three-hour training session at a local prison. There, I completed additional paperwork and observed a live television lecture on ODOC rules and regulations with a group of aspiring volunteers and interns. This lecture was given by a volunteer coordinator and aired in other prison conference

rooms throughout the state. A couple of weeks after I completed and mailed the paperwork I received from this meeting, staff at CRCI collected a fingerprint sample from me and took my picture. Roughly three weeks later, I received my badge (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Volunteer/Intern Badge



Methodologically, there were both pros and cons to having an identification card. On the one hand, the badge alleviated the burden of population gatekeepers, as expected by REU. This made my visit far more pleasant for correctional officers, staff, and administrators who were reasonably concerned about department budget. Having a badge allowed me to walk the halls of CRCI without an escort, helping me to present an independent image to prisoners. To be closely affiliated with correctional officers in particular would have surely tarnished my image as an outside researcher.

On the other hand, having a badge worked against my desired presentation in some respects. The badge looks nearly identical to those issued to prison staff. I routinely had to express to prisoners, both during interviews and observations, that I



was not an ODOC employee. I occasionally held up my badge to curious prisoners and said, “I’m a grad student from Portland State doing research. I don’t work here. They made me get a badge to come in.” Most of these encounters ended with prisoners nodding their heads in approval. Typically these men would then casually ask about my life as a graduate student and my professional goals.

## **Sampling**

### *Subsampling:*

I collected all interview data and a majority of observation data from two major subpopulations of prisoners who completed the six-month assessment (i.e., soon-to-be-released prisoners at CRCI). The first subpopulation, titled “opt-in,” referred to those soon-to-be-released prisoners who signed up for one or more of the five primary Road to Success classes listed on the six-month assessment form. The second subpopulation, titled “opt-out,” referred to those soon-to-be-released prisoners who did not sign up for any of the Road to Success classes.

I subsampled for two reasons. First, REU required that I draw data from both of these groups. REU highlighted their general support for my inquiry into soon-to-be-released prisoners, but they also requested that I make minor comparisons between those who are, and those who are not, involved in the Road to Success classes to aid their own evaluations of the program.<sup>39</sup> Second, knowing that a fair number of soon-to-

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<sup>39</sup> Initially, I proposed to draw a relatively even sample between the opt-in and the opt-out groups. However, once I realized how much easier the opt-in group was to recruit from (described later in this

be-released prisoners at CRCI choose not to participate in Road to Success classes, I was interested in giving voice to this population.

According to an internal report at CRCI, during the year I collected data (2010) most prisoners who completed the six month self-assessment meeting (76 percent) signed up for at least one Road to Success class and the majority signed up for three or more classes. Therefore, in terms of population distribution, at the time of data collection, the opt-in group was a much larger subpopulation of soon-to-be-released prisoners than the opt-out group. The interview sample (n=20) had a similar distribution with 80 percent (n=16) of respondents meeting the opt-in criteria. The remaining 20 percent (n=4) were drawn from the opt-out group.

#### *Opt-In Sampling:*

Those in the opt-in group were easily located in the Road to Success classes and Unit 7, the unit reserved for those prisoners heavily involved in the classes. I conveniently chose three Road to Success sessions to sample from, based on a time that worked well with the course instructor. Two of these sessions were employment classes. Technically, the third session was not a Road to Success class, but instead a guest presentation reserved for prisoners involved in the Road to Success classes. In

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chapter), and in the interest of collecting as much data as possible in a short period of time, I asked and received REU's permission to increase the sample size of the opt-in group and decrease the size of the opt-out group. Thus, mid data-collection I shifted sampling strategies from what might best be described as convenient-comparative subsampling to convenient-purposive subsampling. Instead of sampling from the opt-out group for means of comparison, I sampled from this group for the general purposes of broadening the overall voice of my aggregate sample and to improve my sample's representation of soon-to-be-released prisoners at CRCI. I intend to write and submit an official report comparing interview data from the opt-in and opt-out groups to REU before the end of 2011, with what limited comparisons I can make between a group of 16 (opt-in) and a group of four (opt-out).

each of these meetings, the instructor introduced me as a sociology student from Portland State University and stated that I have an announcement to make. I passed out recruitment flyers (Appendix B) to the 15 or so prisoners in each meeting and then I made a quick announcement about my research before I would hand out a signup sheet (Appendix C) for prospective participants to list their names.

Each announcement lasted between one to two minutes, and while fairly informal, I generally stated the following,

Hello. My name is Josh Seim. I'm a graduate student from Portland State University in the sociology department. I'm here at CRCI doing research for my master's thesis. I'm here today to see if any guys want to sit down and talk with me for a 30 to 40 minute interview. I simply want to ask you questions about three general topics: your thoughts on prison life, your thoughts about being released from prison, and your general opinions about these transitional courses. All interviews are confidential, meaning when I write my thesis or any other reports from this study, I will never use your real name. I will either use a fake name or no name at all. I won't ask any questions about crimes you've committed or your convictions. I should also note that I don't work for the DOC. I have a badge, but it's just so I can come in here to do research for my master's degree. I'm going to pass around a signup sheet now. If you're interested in sitting down with me for 30 to 40 minutes, please print your name and we'll (referring to the instructor and I) schedule you an interview in the next week.

As I circulated a few signup sheets around the room I continued my announcement,

Truthfully, I'm a graduate student interested in prisons and people being released from prison. I have to write a 100 or so page thesis in order to graduate. I could reasonably write my thesis by just staring at some statistical reports on incarceration and reading tons of books by so-called "experts," which is what many master's student do. However, in my opinion, nobody

knows this stuff better than you guys. You are the real experts on what it's like to live in prison and what it's like to approach release. I don't have any advice to give. I'm not an aspiring counselor, parole officer, or anything like that. I'm not going to preach or teach. I'm here to learn. I want you to teach me. I would prefer to talk to you than read about you.

A total of 16 soon-to-be-released prisoners signed up for interviews during these meetings, all of which were interviewed. It is difficult to determine the recruitment rate as many of the prisoners in the two employment classes I sampled from were also in the guest presentation session. Thus, some prisoners were invited to participate in interviews twice.

Early on during my initial interviews with members of the opt-in subpopulation, I found myself often confused about the information these men shared about the Road to Success courses. After I routinely asked transitional staff about the taken-for-granted events and processes of these classes to help make sense of some of my interview data, they invited me to sit in on the program. I then sought and received permission from REU to conduct overt semi-participatory observations by completing the five primary Road to Success classes with members of the opt-in subpopulation. Over three-fourths of my observation data (roughly 35 hours) was completed during my presence and participation in these classes, and therefore a majority of my observation data is sampled from the opt-in group.

#### *Opt-Out Sampling:*

The four interview respondents from the opt-out group were recruited from a post six month self-assessment recruitment meeting organized by a transitional staff

member and myself. With approval from prison staff and REU, I scheduled two semi-mandatory meetings with 20 recent completers of the six month self-assessment who did not sign up for any Road to Success classes (ten in each group). These two meetings were organized for the sole purpose of recruiting opt-out interview participants. In both of these cases, opt-out prisoners would show up to a meeting that was issued on their callout.<sup>40</sup> These meetings were located in a classroom inside Unit 7, the unit reserved for Road to Success courses, so many of these men assumed that the meeting had something to do with transitional services. After quickly introducing myself as a graduate student researcher from Portland State, I handed out the same recruitment flyer (see Appendix B) and signup sheet (see Appendix C) I used when sampling from the opt-in group.

During my oral announcement and explanation of the study, I explained the project in a nearly identical manner as I did for the opt-in group with this additional statement at the end,

I've talked to several guys involved in the classes over here (referring to Unit 7) and they've given me valuable information about imprisonment and release, but I also want to talk to people not involved in the classes. I'm inviting you guys specifically because you decided not to take any of the Road to Success classes a week or so ago during the six-month assessment. I don't want the Road to Success guys to be the only voice in my research, given that a significant number of prisoners, such as you guys, have decided not to take these classes. I want to hear from all kinds of people approaching release. Also, while I've been

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<sup>40</sup> The ODOC volunteer training manual (available to the public) defines a callout as a "printed list showing inmate appointments." Every night a correctional officer posts the callouts for the next day in each unit. Prisoners are responsible for checking the callout every night to see which activities and events (e.g., classes and medical appointments) they are scheduled to attend the next day. The callouts list the place and time of such appointments.

spending a lot of time talking to Road to Success students and observing their classes, I do not necessarily advocate for the program. I will not criticize you for not signing up for the classes, nor will I try and talk you into taking the classes. I really don't care that you aren't involved over here. I just want to make sure that I don't just talk to Road to Success guys.

Two prisoners from each meeting signed up for interviews, all four of which were interviewed less than a week later. Several of the remaining 16 men at these meetings were quick to leave as soon as I explained that I was seeking volunteer participation. Others waited till the end of my announcement to ask, "Can I leave now?" A couple of these men told me that they were impressed with somebody coming to the penitentiary to learn from prisoners, but that they were uninterested in completing an interview. While it is difficult for me to determine why those in the opt-out group were generally uninterested in participating, given that I did not have many opportunities to interact with this subpopulation, what interaction I did have with these men suggest that they are less trustful, and possibly more cynical, than those in the opt-in group.

While I did not keep strict record of recruitment, out of the two subpopulations, those in the opt-in group clearly signed up for interviews at a greater rate. This pattern may be partly due to the "type" of prisoner involved in the Road to Success classes. One of the many ways of coping with one's sentence is staying busy. Consequently, some prisoners will sign up for several activities and events in an attempt to occupy daylight hours. It is possible that some, if not all, of the 16 sampled opt-in prisoners cope with imprisonment in this manner and signed up interviews for something to do, similar to how they may have signed up for Road to Success classes to "kill time" (a couple of

respondents told me they did this). In contrast, the opt-out subpopulation seemed to hold a general and apparent disinterest in participating in my study, possibly because they employ different strategies for coping with their sentence. If this assessment is valid, my sample over represents prisoners simply looking to eat up time and under represents prisoners who “do their time” in other ways.

### **Data Collection Design and Practice**

#### *Interviews:*

I conducted, recorded, and transcribed interviews with 20 soon-to-be-released prisoners at CRCI. Interviews were designed to be completed in 30 to 40 minutes. The average interview length was just over 29 minutes, with the shortest lasting 14 minutes and the longest lasting 48 minutes.<sup>41</sup> While such a time span is short for interview data collection, this was an appropriate length for completing and transcribing 20 interviews in roughly six months, in addition to the time I dedicated to access, sampling, and observations.

I created a highly structured protocol to guide my interviews (see Appendix D). The protocol was constructed to target three core themes: reflections on life inside prison, predictions and preparations for prison release and (re)integration, and respondents’ experiences and opinions regarding the Road to Success classes. Primary questions and probes loosely aimed to operationalize Bourdieu’s “thinking tools,” specifically the concept of capital. However, questions were designed primarily to

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<sup>41</sup> Interview time calculated by rounding recording duration to the nearest quarter of a minute.

address key themes identified in the literature on imprisonment, release, and inequality (e.g., access to employment and housing). Operationalization of theoretical concepts was, for the most part, reserved for the analysis stage.

All interviews were held inside the prison in either empty transitional staff members' offices or a small meeting office informally titled the "attorney room." These locations were semi-private. The three different staff offices all had large windows (generally three feet tall by four feet wide). Many staff, correctional officers, and prisoners would briefly peak through the window during interviews as they walked by. One of these offices, where four interviews were held, sat adjacent to the "chow hall" (the cafeteria). Lunch hour brought a high traffic of prisoners just outside the office. The attorney room afforded a bit more visual privacy as it only had one small window embedded in the door (roughly 18 inches tall by six inches wide). All rooms appeared to be completely private in regard to audio, and I have no reason to believe that the conversations I held with interviewees were overhead by staff, correctional officers, or other prisoners. I also have no reason to believe that respondents were concerned about privacy.

Before all interviews began, I reintroduced myself, thanked interviewees for their time, summarized the project (similar to how I did so at the sampling stage), and loosely stated the following,

I'm going to do everything in my power to keep our conversation confidential. I'm not going to share any specific details about you with staff, COs (referring to correctional officers), POs (referring to parole officers), or the cops. In order to do that, there are a few things we simply can't talk about today. Please don't tell me



about any crimes you've committed but have not been convicted for. General details about the crime you're serving a sentence on right now or in the past are ok, but I won't ask you any questions about them. Also, don't tell me about any crimes you plan, or are considering, to commit in the future. Don't tell me about any plans to hurt yourself in here (referring to the prison) or any plans to hurt other prisoners. Again, I'm not going to ask about these things, so it shouldn't be a big deal. I just want to clear things up.

Next, I gave participants time to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix E).

In addition to seeking their written consent, the consent form asks permission to invite interview respondents for a follow up study within the next five years. Once respondents reached this portion of the form, I explained that I might be interested in talking to them again in the future. Those participants who gave me permission to contact them in the next five years were given additional space to provide post-prison contact information. Out of the 20 interviews respondents, 15 gave me permission to invite them for a follow up study in the next five years, 13 of which listed some form of contact information outside of prison (usually a phone number of a close relative).

After the consent form, all participants completed an eight item pre-interview questionnaire (see Appendix F). I designed this questionnaire to collect supplementary interview data in a quick manner. The first four questions ("When do you expect to be released or paroled?", "How old are you?", "What race do you consider yourself?", and "Is this your first time in prison?") were of specific interest to me. The remaining questions addressed previous and expected housing and employment arrangements and were primarily included to help guide conversations. During interviews, I frequently

referenced respondents' answers to these latter questions to guide my inquiry into soon-to-be-released prisoners' release and (re)integration predictions.

With verbal permission from respondents, all interviews were audio recorded. For the most part, I addressed all the primary questions (bold items in Appendix D) in each interview. I loosely rotated between probes in a non-systematic manner for different interviews. I aimed to balance an interview processes that sat between highly structured interviews and so-called "guided conversations."

I jotted notes during all interviews. I primarily did this for purposes of guiding interview transcription and transcription analysis. Jotted notes also aided my guidance of conversations, as they afforded me an opportunity to return to previous comments and topics brought up in the same interview.

In addition to these 20 formal interviews, I held multiple informal conversations with soon-to-be-released prisoners during the time I spent at the prison sampling, interviewing, and observing. For example, while I waited for classes to begin for observation in Unit 7, it was not uncommon for a prisoner housed in that unit to spark a conversation with me regarding their upcoming release. I noted general details of these conversations in my field notes. While not strictly speaking interview data, these conversations nevertheless influenced my understanding of the soon-to-be-released prisoners in general and my interpretation of my data in particular. General details of these conversations were synthesized with observation data.

### *Observations:*

I logged approximately 45 hours of observation (see Appendix G), accounting for nearly half of the time I spent in the field. Observations were far less structured than interviews. I did not use an observation code sheet. However, observations were not solely inductive, as a majority of my observations were taken after I completed all 16 opt-in interviews. My vision of soon-to-be-released prisoners and CRCI had already undergone some conditioning by the interviews I completed. My senses were somewhat biased towards the worldview of the opt-in group.

Even though observations were intentionally designed to be exploratory, I nevertheless employed a systematic method of data collection. I took handwritten jotted notes during or immediately following observation. I frequently expanded these notes after observation with additional handwritten notes. I typically did this before departing from the premises as I sat inside my car in CRCI's staff and visitor parking lot. Usually within seven days of observation, these notes were recorded and expanded further in a digital word-processing document.

A majority of observation data was drawn from the opt-in subpopulation (roughly 85 percent of logged observation hours). As mentioned earlier, one of my primary justifications for collecting observation data was to alleviate the confusion I held while interviewing the opt-in group. I completed the five primary Road to Success classes with prisoners. Observation of these classes accounted for roughly two-thirds (35 hours) of my observation data. During these observations I recorded notes concerning the following: curriculum design and execution, prisoner-prisoner

interactions, prisoner-instructor interactions, my interactions with prisoners, my interactions with the instructor, prisoner use of language, instructor use of language, prisoner body posture, and general setting details regarding the classroom.

My *status* as an observer in the Road to Success classes was overt. My tan khaki pants and logo-less long-sleeve tee shirt clearly set me apart from other students in the penitentiary classroom dressed in dark blue prisoner attire. Early on during courses, the instructor would introduce me to the class as a Portland State University graduate student who is observing life in prison and is curious about prison release issues. After a while, I became a familiar face in these classes and introductions were no longer necessary. All prisoners who completed the Road to Success classes with me, and subsequently those who were observed in these classes, knew that I was an observer.

My *role* as an observer in the Road to Success classes was semi-participatory. I sat with prisoners as a student of the program. I participated in all in-class activities, including individual and group exercises.<sup>42</sup> I completed all five courses in full and was awarded the same certificate that prisoners receive for completing these courses (see Appendix H).

The additional ten or so logged observation hours included various activities and events. I was given two guided tours of CRCI (one during my initial arrival to the prison and one just before I completed data collection). I also attended two guest

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<sup>42</sup> I should note that I did not complete the mock interview exercise that is required in the employment course. I was concerned that my participation would unnecessarily use ODOC resources (e.g., volunteer interviewer time and video recording material). Instead, I volunteered to serve as an interviewer for mock interviews in a latter employment class.

presentations reserved for those in the opt-in group. I observed one six-month assessment meeting. Lastly, I jotted notes about my experience sampling from the opt-out group.

## **Analysis**

### *Deduction and Induction:*

I employed both deductive and inductive reasoning during the analysis of my interview transcripts and field notes. Deduction is evident as I aim to “advance theory,” to use Ragin’s (1994) terminology. I designed this thesis with the intention to apply Bourdieu’s field theory in general, and to employ his “thinking tools” in particular. Well before analysis, data collection, sampling, and access, I designed a preliminary codebook from my early readings of Bourdieu (see Appendix I) as I simultaneously constructed the interview protocol during the proposal writing stage.

However, when employing Bourdieu’s relational method, it is inappropriate to simply shove data within theoretically constructed categories. As noted in Chapter II, the relational method calls for a dual consideration of objectivity and subjectivity. In terms of “doing” sociology, a simultaneous application of theory and research is needed (Bourdieu 1984;1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). With this in mind, I borrowed two inductive strategies from grounded theory to complement deduction in an attempt to construct a more holistic and relational-inspired analysis. First, I lightly memoed throughout the data collection and analysis stages, and during this time I revised specific definitions and indicators of each code initially designed at the proposal stage. Second, I

employed line-by-line coding at the initial stage of analysis. While this project clearly does not fall under the umbrella of “grounded theory” as outlined by Charmaz (2006), I loosely employ some of her suggested analytical strategies.

*Code Construction and Implementation:*

I completed one round of initial line-by-line coding of all interview transcripts and observation field notes. Initial coding is highly inductive and requires the researcher to “stick closely to the data” where he or she attempts to “see actions in each segment of data rather than applying preexisting categories to the data” (Charmaz 2006:47). I used transcription and field note lines as the “segment” (unit of analysis) during initial coding (Charmaz 2006; Lofland et al. 2006). Afterwards, I cleaned these codes by splitting and collapsing raw codes into 111 topical categories in a second codebook (see Appendix J), with rough notes on possible subcategories kept in my memos.

Rather than analyzing all of these data-generated codes, I limited the next stage of my analysis to the boundaries of my theoretical and empirical questions.<sup>43</sup> Using both the preliminary codebook I constructed in the proposal stage and the line-by-line codebook developed through initial coding, I constructed a “focused” codebook (see Appendix K).

Here, I diverged from conventional practices of grounded theory. Focused coding, according to Charmaz (2006:57-60) and other grounded theorists involves the

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<sup>43</sup> Out of the three primary interview protocol themes (life in prison, expectations and plans for release, and attitudes regarding Road to Success classes), this thesis mostly addresses the second theme but also taps loosely into the other two. An additional paper is under development regarding the first theme, specifically addressing the “prisoner code” as explained by interview respondents. Also, I am currently writing an official report to REU regarding the third theme, which I plan to submit by year-end 2011.

researcher engaging in a second major phase of coding, in which he or she recodes relevant data using codes developed during initial coding. I tweaked this method to be more deductive for purposes of theory advancement. Thus, I did not develop a focused codebook by solely reviewing and evaluating the most “significant and/or frequent” initial line-by-line codes (Charmaz 2006:57). Instead, I developed my focused codebook by reviewing and evaluating both my initial codebook (rooted in induction and “methodologism”) and my preliminary codebook (rooted in dedication and “theoreticism”). Looking for both points of complement and conflict, I developed a focused codebook.

The eight primary codes in the focused codebook were broad and non-directional. For example, interview data coded under the “employment hunt” code varied in regard to respondents’ specific attitudes, expectations, and plans regarding their upcoming job search. During focused coding I used a word processing “copy and paste” function to transfer quotes, observations, and relevant memos under the appropriate codes in the focused codebook. Afterwards, I organized focused data into directional sub-codes as needed (e.g., “confident about employment hunt” and “nervous about employment hunt”). These directional sub-codes were then used to aid my outlining of the following chapter.

## Conclusion

In summary, I employ ethnographic methods to answer my research questions addressing soon-to-be-released prisoners understandings and preparations for prison release. CRCI is an ideal ODOC facility to study prisoners approaching release and the

Road to Success courses and Unit 7 are the best spaces in CRCI to study prisoners serving their final six months or less.

Although ethnography is naturally biased towards subjectivism, my data collection and analysis strategies aim to balance both objective and subjective techniques. Interview design and practice is somewhat biased toward structure for purposes of quick and targeted data collection. In contrast, observations are highly exploratory. In a similar fashion, my analytical techniques draw from both deductive and inductive reasoning and practice. I argue that this peculiar strategy of mixing and matching structured/unstructured and deductive/inductive techniques is appropriate when employing Bourdieu's relational method. Table 4 summarizes my dual application of these dichotomized logics.

**Table 4: Objective and Subjective Methodological Techniques**

|            | Objective             | Subjective               |
|------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Collection | Structured Interviews | Exploratory Observations |
| Analysis   | Theory Advancement    | Semi-Grounded Theory     |

This is not to say that I evenly balance objectivity and subjectivity, but I nevertheless take conscious steps to counterbalance the subjective orientation of ethnography. As noted in Chapter II, where objectivity is biased toward structure, macro analyses, and positivist modes of inquiry, subjectivity, in contrast, is biased toward agency, micro analyses, and exploratory modes of inquiry. Bourdieu's (1989) relational method calls for an intellectual triangulation between these two traditions. The empirical framework I employ to answer my research questions aims to answers said



questions by adding objective-inspired techniques of collection and analysis (i.e., structured interviews and theory advancement) to balance the inherently subjective nature of qualitative research.

I spent roughly 100 hours in the field sampling, interviewing, and observing. That amount of time was surely doubled by the hours dedicated to access and analysis. The next chapter presents the findings from this study and considers their theoretical implications. Following the processes of capital erosion and habitus adjustment, as illustrated in Chapter III, the next chapter aims to detail how do soon-to-be-released prisoners at CRCI understand and prepare for release in general, and their upcoming attempts to (re)integrate in particular.

## **CHAPTER V: AWAITING AN OPEN GATE**

The following chapter details the findings of my research and is composed of four parts. Part One reviews the setting and salient patterns of my data. For purposes of further detailing the setting, I turn to additional resources, including a dataset shared with my by ODOC that reviews all current (in March 2011) ODOC prisoners' responses to employment and education items on their intake questionnaire, before I review general themes of interviews and observations. Part Two details the worldview of prisoners approaching release. This section is highly inductive. The third and fourth parts aim to advance theory by considering the implications of capital (Part Three) and habitus (Part Four).

In an attempt to keep the report of findings close to the data, I borrow some terminology from my respondents. I use four "prison words" throughout this chapter: "the outs," "the gate," "going straight," and "fell." Figure 5 lists these terms and provides my interpretive definitions. While these five phrases are by no means an exhaustive list of prison slang, these are words that emerge commonly in interview transcripts and field notes. I borrow these terms and employ them throughout this chapter.

**Figure 5: Borrowing Prisoner Terminology**

1. The Outs: the world outside of prison (the “free world”)
2. The Gate: exiting prison / the physical exit of the institution\*
3. Going Straight: adopting a non-criminal, integrated, and usually working class lifestyle
4. Fell: arrest or crime leading to imprisonment / the date an inmate was arrested\*

\* Indicates a definition provided by the Oregon Department of Corrections training manual. All other definitions are generated from the author’s interpretations of the terms.

## PART ONE: INTRODUCING AND POSITIONING DATA

### The Setting

#### *Hyperincarceration in Oregon:*

During my final month of data collection (December, 2010), ODOC held 13,872 prisoners distributed across 14 facilities (ODOC 2010a). According to the Sentencing Project (2011), a national research and advocacy think tank, Oregon imprisons 373 per 100,000, lower than the nation, which imprisons at 502 per 100,000. Overall, ODOC prisoners account for less than one percent of the total state and federal prisoner population in America.

Nevertheless, a deeper inquiry into these statistics unveils Oregon as a state that practices hyperincarceration along with the nation as a whole. The so-called “Pacific Wonderland” incarcerates high numbers of those individuals and groups low in capital. Consider the economic species. Less than half of all Oregon prisoners claimed they held employment at their most recent arrest. At intake, roughly 34 percent noted they held full time employment and about 13 percent held part time employment.<sup>44</sup> These

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<sup>44</sup> The remaining 53 percent provided no answer to the intake questionnaire question regarding employment.

numbers are similar for prisoners housed at CRCI specifically, with about 30 percent of these men stating they worked full time and just over 13 stating they worked part time. Several unemployed at-arrest prisoners in Oregon (roughly 8,000) provided information regarding their pre-imprisonment unemployment. Two-fifths (40 percent) of these prisoners claimed they were unemployed for over a year at the time of arrest.

Among the minority of prisoners who held employment when they fell, their pre-imprisonment economic position is best described as “working class” or “working poor.” Of those Oregon prisoners who provided information on their hourly wage at the point of intake, nearly a third (30 percent) stated they made \$10.00 or less an hour and over half (56 percent) made \$15.00 or less. Also, of those who provided information addressing the continuation of their employment, 30 percent claimed they held their job for less than 12 months. Among this less-than-one-year employed subpopulation, most (68 percent) stated they held their job at-arrest for under six months. Overall, these percentages are demonstrative of current Oregon prisoners being low in economic capital when they arrived to prison. Most did not hold employment, and those who did made working class or working poor wages.

Academic background is also noteworthy. Educational level sheds light on the socioeconomic status of prisoners and is a simplified indicator of cultural capital (specifically in the institutionalized form). At the point of intake, barely two percent of all Oregon prisoners, and just over two-and-half percent of those housed at CRCI, held a college degree (i.e., Associates, Bachelor, or Masters). Roughly a quarter (about 23 percent of all Oregon prisoners and 26 percent of those at CRCI) held a high school

diploma. At intake, almost half of all prisoners in Oregon (about 42 percent) stood at the education level ODOC titles “none,” referring to those individuals who do not even hold a GED.

While it is risky to compare these figures with census data when not controlling for age, a cautious comparison suggests that prisoners housed in Oregon are less educated than the population of free Oregonians. About 85 percent of Oregon residents over the age of 25 hold a high school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED) (U.S. Census 2011). Only 56 percent of ODOC prisoners held a diploma or GED at intake. This suggests, in comparison to the general adult population, Oregon prisoners are low in cultural capital.

In addition to locking up the economically destitute and the uneducated, Oregon, parallel with the nation, incarcerates a greater proportion of dark bodies over white ones. According to the Sentencing Project (2011), the black-white incarceration ratio (not deciphering between prisons and jails) is 5.8:1 in Oregon and 5.6:1 in the nation. Thus, proportionately, black Oregonians are incarcerated at a rate that is nearly six times that of white Oregonians. And, although blacks make up two percent of Oregon residents in 2010, they account for nearly 10 percent of all ODOC prisoners and roughly a quarter (23 percent) of those housed in CRCI (U.S. Census 2011; ODOC 2010a).

These statistics are demonstrative of hyperincarceration. Oregon cells and bunks are spaces not for the masses, but for the destitute, the dishonored, and the marginalized. The numbers above illustrate how Oregon-specific information regarding

the social profile of prisoners reflects those patterns highlighted in Chapter III. In continuing my discussion of setting, I next describe CRCI.

*Columbia River Correctional Institution:*

Just over 20 years old, CRCI is a minimum-security men's prison located in a place that is semi-urban and semi-industrial on the cuff of Oregon's largest metropolitan area. Only a couple of miles away from Portland International Airport, planes routinely ascend and descend above the facility. The sounds of commercial jets muffle many of the noises on the yard, and can often be heard from inside the prison, especially during the early morning before most prisoners wake.

Unlike the thousands of travels who pass above the facility every day, the 600 or so prisoners at CRCI are contained within a 26-acre space outlined by a chain link fence. The height of this roughly 10 foot tall fence is extended an additional foot or two by the rolls of barbwire that grip its top. This design is often appreciated by prisoners who have done time in other prisons bordered by concrete walls of comparable or greater height.

CRCI is often informally described as a "release prison" among ODOC staff and prisoners. It is a facility reserved for those male prisoners in Oregon serving less than four years or less than their final four years. For the most part, CRCI is also reserved for prisoners who will be released to the Portland metropolitan area. Many prisoners "come down" from other minimum, medium, and maximum-security facilities in Oregon to serve their final months or years at CRCI.

Three general classes of people share the 26-acre space, and each class can be identified by their wardrobe. The majority class are prisoners. These men are dressed

from head to toe in denim blue (with the exception of those in disciplinary green sweatshirts). Both their pants and shirts are stamped with an orange ODOC shield (approximately eight inches high and five inches wide). The word “INMATE” (orange letters about two and half inches high) sits bellow the emblem wherever it is stamped. Correctional officers are also a highly uniformed class, dressed in mostly grey with black boots, utility belts, and accessories. The remaining individuals compile a conglomerate of managers, general staff, and volunteers who typically dress within the boundaries of “business casual” to “professional.” Members of this group, including myself, have the option of wearing a variety of clothing. Among general rules of not wearing open-toe shoes or skin-tight clothing, members of this third class are forbidden to wear jeans because the tone and fabric too closely resemble prisoner attire.

The facility is two stories high. Areas in the prison include classrooms, the “chow hall” (i.e., the cafeteria), a metal shop, and a small medical office. However, eight dormitories, which together hold 595 beds, eat a majority of CRCI space. Bunk beds, stacked side-by-side, fill these living quarters referred to as “units.” One unit is titled the “honor dorm” and has specific amenities unmatched by other quarters, such as a video game console and a large flat screen television. This dorm is reserved for the most docile and obedient prisoners, or in other words, prisoners who have avoided prison-rule infractions for the longest period of time. Another dorm, sometimes called “treatment dorm” or “treatment” houses those prisoners heavily involved in drug and alcohol programming. Unit 7, formally a dual diagnosis dorm (i.e., for prisons struggling with *both* chemical addiction and mental health problems), was recently restructured

(late summer 2010) to house those prisoners heavily involved in the Road to Success courses. I spent many hours in this unit.

#### *Unit 7:*

Housing the Road to Success program and 61 beds for a many of the opt-in subpopulation, Unit 7 sits on the southeast corner of CRCI. When walking south down the main hall of the facility, I take a left into Unit 7, just before approaching the doorway to the yard. A mural of mountaineer scaling a mountain, roughly four-feet-by-four-feet, painted by a prisoner, greets people entering the dorm. The words “Welcome to the Road to Success” are painted next to the image. Most my visits to Unit 7 involve me spending a majority of my time engaging in overt semi-participatory observation of the Road to Success program in two classrooms. The word “utility” best describes these rooms, as whites and greys overwhelm much of their color tone.

#### **Interview Data**

Table 5.1 outlines general details of the interview sample. Overall, 20 soon-to-be-released prisoners completed interviews. The mean age of respondents is roughly 37, with the youngest respondent reporting an age of 19 and the oldest reporting an age of 68. Most are white (n=17). Two black men and one Hispanic/Latino man also completed interviews. A majority (n=14) are serving their first prison sentence. The average time left to serve for respondents is just over two months, with a couple serving their final two weeks (minimum) and couple serving their final six months (maximum).



**Table 5.1: General Demographics of Interview Respondents**

|                                      |              |                     |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| <i>Age:</i>                          |              |                     |
| Mean = 37.4                          | Minimum = 19 | Max = 68            |
| <i>Race:</i>                         |              |                     |
| White = 17                           | Black = 2    | Hispanic/Latino = 1 |
| <i>First Time in Prison:</i>         |              |                     |
| Yes = 14                             | No = 6       |                     |
| <i>Number of Months to Release:*</i> |              |                     |
| Mean = 2.2                           | Minimum= 0.5 | Max = 6             |

\*Respondents only provided the month and year of their expected date of release on the pre-interview questionnaire. I calculated the number of months to release by counting the approximate number of months between the date of interviews and the month-of-release data reported on the questionnaire.

Table 5.2 compares the race distribution of my interview sample to that of CRCI and the overall Oregon prisoner population. Whites at CRCI are overrepresented in the sample, as they account for 85 percent of interviewees, but only 70 percent of the total CRCI population. Blacks make up a tenth of the sample, but nearly a quarter (23 percent) of CRCI prisoners. CRCI is blacker than the total ODOC prison population, which is a tenth black.

**Table 5.2: Comparing Race Demographics (%)**

|          | Sample | CRCI | ODOC | Oregon |
|----------|--------|------|------|--------|
| White    | 85     | 70   | 73   | 84     |
| Black    | 10     | 23   | 10   | 2      |
| Hispanic | 5      | 3    | 13   | 11.7   |

Source: ODOC 2010a; U.S. Census 2011

Similarly, Table 5.3 compares age demographics. The most represented age group in my sample, at CRCI, and in the overall ODOC prisoner population are those prisoners 31 to 45 years old. However, my sample has a higher percentage of younger prisoners (18 to 24) than CRCI and ODOC. In general, my sample is whiter and younger.

**Table 5.3: Comparing Age Demographics (%)**

|              | Sample | CRCI | ODOC |
|--------------|--------|------|------|
| 18 to 24     | 20     | 8    | 14   |
| 25 to 30     | 20     | 17   | 20   |
| 31 to 45     | 30     | 43   | 40   |
| 46 to 60     | 25     | 28   | 22   |
| 61 and Older | 5      | 5    | 5    |

Source: ODOC 2010a

Interview data may be organized by my two research questions. With respect to *understandings* of release, some respondents approach their exit with excitement and hope, while others tell me they are fearful and uncertain of the future. *All* respondents

tell me that they want to stay out of prison. For 19 of these men, this includes the adoption of a conformed non-criminal lifestyle, sometimes called the “straight life.” While this lifestyle holds somewhat different meanings to different respondents, many note that it includes two general markers or prerequisites, an honest income and permanent housing. Several of these men appear to recognize the processes and effects of individual-level capital erosion and predict that they will not have enough “resources” when they immediately exit prison to secure a legitimate and dependable source of money (e.g., stable employment in the formal economy) and/or permanent housing.

In terms of *preparations* for release, many of these men share their intended plans and strategies to stay out of prison. Plans include respondents’ preemptive and calculated “game plans” to (re)integrate. These are their pragmatic predictions of how they will attempt to go straight, such as their statements on how and when they will engage their property-rental and employment hunts following release. Current strategies include data regarding respondents’ pre-release attempts to increase their likelihood of going straight, such as taking the Road to Success employment class to build job interview skills and construct a resume. In several respects, strategies include attempts to secure capital for (re)integrative purposes from behind bars, and plans include both intentions to use said capital and predictions of how to secure capital for (re)integrative purposes following release.

## Observation Data

Field notes address two major themes, social setting and the Road to Success program. Setting notes generally highlight the prison in general and Unit 7 (as summarized earlier). Road to Success observations may be divided into two core themes, expected (re)integration barriers and proposed strategies for overcoming them. The primary challenges highlighted in the curriculum-design and student-prisoner discussions include the following: access to money, housing (usually referring to permanent housing), stigma (usually referring to the felony conviction), successfully navigating post-prison supervision, repositioning one's self in the family, avoiding drugs and alcohol (specifically for those prisoners who admit having a chemical addiction/dependency), and avoiding "old crowds" (i.e., social groups on the outside that promote criminal or substance abuse behavior). While this list of expected challenges is by no means exhaustive, these are both the most commonly highlighted challenges and are all triangulated by interview data.

Proposed strategies for overcoming the above challenges, as highlighted during Road to Success observation, may be further broken-down into two general subthemes, individualism and resources. According to the curriculum, successful (re)integration following release is highly dependent on an individual's motivations and decisions. Program participants are encouraged to take ownership of their mistakes (e.g., reasons for their imprisonment) and agency in their attempts to successfully transition into the community. However, beyond this "pick yourself up by the bootstraps" philosophy, the curriculum stresses the importance of both attaining and using various material and

non-material resources to overcome challenges, such as receiving proper identification for an employment hunt or seeking moral support from family and friends to motivate sobriety or desistance.

To summarize, most participants appear to be aware of the many challenges prisoners face upon release. Additionally, many take proactive steps to increase their chances of overcoming these challenges, such as by developing “game plans.” The remaining parts of this chapter explore in greater depth soon-to-be-released prisoners’ understandings of these barriers and their strategies to overcome them.

## PART TWO: APPROACHING THE GATE

### **Hopes and Dreams to Get Out and Stay Out**

In the final months of incarceration men at the prison are said to “approach,” “near,” or are “at” the gate. Soon-to-be-released prisoners often count down the remaining days of their incarceration, and the thought of release seems to occupy much of their time. During the Road to Success classes, prisoners often discuss how much time they have left. “I’m getting out in 18 days” and similar statements are heard throughout the prison, especially in Unit 7.

Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, many prisoners think heavily about their upcoming release. One convict, roughly six months to the gate, says, “I’m just looking forward to that first couple weeks of grubbing, some real food.” Stories of men “literally kissing the ground” once released circulate in the prison. However exciting an upcoming exit may be, the final months of imprisonment also come equipped with a fair

dose of fear and uncertainty for several of these men. A prisoner serving his final months of a seven-year sentence tells me “I’m just as nervous to get out as I was to come in.”

Some approach the gate with clearly stated plans. One respondent, a 26 year old first timer, states a clear plan to temporarily live with his father, regain employment as a heavy equipment operator with his previous employer, save his money, and then move out of his father’s place of residence. Such linear plans are common and typically include a discussion of temporary shelter (e.g., with a relative or in transitional housing), securing employment, saving money, and then moving into long-term housing once they are “on their feet.” However, not all soon-to-be-released prisoners approach the gate with such clearly stated plans. Some appear to inch toward release with no plans at all. One respondent, on his final six months, says, “I don’t even know what the hell I’m going to do (out the gate).”

While each participant approaches the gate with a unique perspective, all interview respondents describe a fundamental desire to stay out of prison. Only one of these men tells me he plans to continue his criminality following release with hopes not to get caught. However, for most soon-to-be-released prisoners, the desire to stay out of prison is coupled with an intention to go straight, or in other words, with the goal to adopt a conforming and integrated lifestyle as a “productive member of society.”

## **Money and Shelter as Primary Goals**

While perceptions of the straight life and dreams of (re)integration vary among participants, money and shelter are seen by all respondents to be fundamental for a successful transition. An honest income and a safe place to live are seen as both definitive of, and a requirement for, the straight life. The conformed and integrated man in America, according to the worldview of my participants, has, at very least, a roof over his head and access to a legitimate (i.e., non-criminal) source of money. Many participants highlight amenities of the straight life as well, such as having a car or a computer, but they see an honest income and shelter as necessary first.

For most respondents, hopes of attaining an honest income usually manifest through goals of securing a “real job” following release. The phrase “real job” may generally be translated as stable fulltime employment in the formal economy, or in other words not an “under the table job” or a “temp job” (e.g., Labor Ready positions). Employment in the formal economy is recognized by respondents as important for many reasons, such as for keeping them busy and pleasing their parole officers, but it is primarily valued for the income it generates. An honest income, and money in general, is often viewed as a pathway out of crime, according to my participants.

A 29 year old first timer who hopes to eventually secure employment as a carpenter, but says he will take a job “anywhere” at first, highlights the importance of an honest income for released prisoners,

For me what’s most critical when it comes to that type of thing (key to success on the outside) is the employment. It really is. Because, without having some sort of income

you're not going to be able to have a house. You can't have a car. You can't have a relationship. You can't take someone out on dates. You're not going to have anything if you don't have some sort of income. For the most part, most people in here, if you don't have a honest income, you're going to wind up going back to whatever your problem was, selling drugs, stealing stuff, whatever it was. You're going to wind up going back down that same path.

Similarly, another prisoner highlights the importance of money to his upcoming (re)integration attempt,

I think money will be very important because most crimes are committed because cats need money. Well, the people I know is because they need money. If I have it, I wont ever need to reoffend or I wont fall back into a depressing state were I am pressed to go get money. If I have money I'll be able to provide my needs and wants and for my children.

Respondents hold varying degrees of confidence in terms of searching for employment following imprisonment. One prisoner states, "I don't see an employer in the world that will hire me." Conversely, a couple of respondents tell me their criminal record will benefit them in the job market. They believe employers stand to gain from hiring ex-prisoners for tax purposes. One 50 year old first time prisoner, who plans to return to a career in truck driving once he clears up his license and retrain at a truck driving school, states,

They got jobs for released prisoners before they do anybody else. I benefit them by them hiring me. I already know that. It's nothing I worry about...Any place like that (McDonalds), that's corporate, is going to have tax benefits through the state and federal (governments) by hiring me.



Such trust in corporate tax breaks are, for the most part, rare within interviews, but optimism is not. Several prisoners stress that securing employment is “all about how you apply yourself.” Multiple respondents recognize the employment challenges ex-prisoners face, but are confident that they will overcome such barriers. Many believe if they work hard enough they will succeed on the outs.

Some respondents note they will most likely not look for work following release, because they hope to secure an honest income through other means. A couple of interview respondents, and a few prisoners I observed, state plans to attend school, usually a community college, following their exit. Most of these men have started or completed their FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) paperwork in prison and plan to pursue skilled trades in various fields including: audio-visual, electrical, and construction. Two respondents, one 50 years old and the other 68 years old, state they are retired and both plan on moving in with their fiancés.<sup>45</sup> For the most part, however, soon-to-be-released prisoners hope to enter the formal labor market as soon as they are released or sometime in the future (e.g., after career training).

A few interview respondents note they have specific employment positions waiting for them on the outs. For example, one prisoner tells me he was able to warn his supervisor during the period in-between his arrest and his sentencing that he may go to prison. His supervisor promised him a position upon release. However, transitional staff explicitly warn soon-to-be-released prisoners from putting too much faith in such

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<sup>45</sup> The discussion of “fiancés” and “ex-fiancés” are common in both interview and observation data. I did not inquire into these titles or the likelihood of marriage. I simply employ the same language as my participants.

positions. In many of the Road to Success courses I observed, prisoners are encouraged to have multiple plans for income on the outs in case one falls through. Too often, according to transitional staff, prisoners have so-called “sure deals” waiting for them that do not actually pan out in the end. Road to Success classes charge prisoners to secure as many (re)integration plans as possible, such as having a “Plan A” a “Plan B” and a “Plan C” for both employment and housing.

Most respondents have either general ideas of where they will apply for work (e.g., plans to apply to car dealerships) or simply plan to apply anywhere and everywhere on the outs. In response to the pre-interview questionnaire item “Where do you plan to work once you are released?” several interviewees wrote responses like “Anywhere,” “IDK” (abbreviation for “I don’t Know”), and “Not Sure.” Others wrote more focused answers such as “Landscaping” and “A Restaurant.” Similarly, during interviews, several respondents claim they will accept any position at any organization, while others list specific companies and trades they hope to secure employment from. When talking about his upcoming job hunt on the outs, one prisoner says, “What I expect is to have to get out there and beat feet. I’ll just apply to as many places as I can, again not being picky at what it is, and just hope for the best.”

An other prisoner highlights somewhat more targeted job hunting plans,

I’m gonna try and go back to my company, Costco, that I worked 10 years for. They are felony friendly and I’m really good and tight with the manager there so hopefully I can get that job back. But if not, I took the flagging certificate, I’m gonna try to be a flagger.

In addition to thinking about employment and income, soon-to-be-released prisoners think, and often stress, about their living arrangements once they get out of prison. Many respondents highlight safe shelter as fundamental to ex-prisoner success on the outs. One 40 year old convict, less than two months to the gate, who plans on temporarily living in a halfway house, emphasizes the importance of housing, “If you got a roof over your head, everything else comes after that.”

Similar to discussions of employment, a few respondents note that they have permanent living arrangements waiting for them on the outs. Such permanent living arrangements appear to be rare and usually involve moving in with a significant other, an immediate family member, or a close friend. Such a rarity is a 55 year old first timer serving a six year mandatory-minimum, who owns a house. He has a family member and a non-contracted renter living in the house paying rent in the form of covering his mortgage.

When wrestling with the housing-or-employment chicken-or-the-egg question, several respondents plan to secure temporary housing first, then employment, and then more permanent housing. For many prisoners, immediate living arrangements on the outs are said to be temporary, generally in the form of transitional housing or briefly staying with a friend or relative. During this time, these men plan to “get on their feet,” or in other words, secure an income *before* they embark on a permanent housing hunt.

This pathway is commonly highlighted as necessary because permanent housing is usually too expensive for people right out the gate, as one 21 year old prisoner states,

I'm only gonna be coming out there with 39 dollars...if not 39 than probably 32. So 32 dollars for a deposit for an apartment really's not going to do a lot....Money's gonna be hard because we have to find a job before we can find a place.

Income is recognized as a prerequisite to permanent housing because most property rentals require rental deposits, first month's rent, and occasionally last month's rent at the time of signing a rental agreement. Some apartments may also charge a cleaning fee, and according to the material presented in the housing course, landlords may legally increase a deposit charge for felons. Additionally, most respondents expect potential landlords to request proof of income as part of their admissions criteria.

In Chapter III I suggested that permanent housing and a legitimate source of money may be understood as two markers (i.e., definitive elements) and prerequisites for an integrated life in America by briefly reviewing the literature on prison-release and (re)integration. My participants apparently share a similar conception. What is sometimes called the "straight life" among prisoners, and what their release counselors, penitentiary-offered program coordinators, and parole officers vaguely title "community reintegration" and "criminal desistence," requires shelter and money. Most respondents believe that a safe place to live and an honest income are keys to their "success on the outside" (to use the phrasing of the interview protocol). For most, access to housing, an honest income, or both are seen as challenging. However, housing and income are not the only release challenges highlighted by soon-to-be-released prisoners at CRCI.

### **Other Challenges: Staying Clean, Stigma, and Avoiding Old Crowds**

Several respondents highlight other challenges they expect to face out the gate, including struggles with sobriety, stigmatization, and joining new peer groups. When coupled with the above discussion on housing and employment, these three additional challenges certainly still do not compose an exhaustive list of anticipated struggles my participants face. Nevertheless, given their popularity in the data, a brief discussion of each is warranted.

A popular answer to questions like “What will be key to surviving outside of prison?” and “What will be key to your success on the outside?” was “staying sober” and similar responses. Many prisoners point to alcohol and drugs as a primary reason for their incarceration either directly (e.g., convicted of possession or distribution) or indirectly (e.g., committing crimes while intoxicated), and thus many of these men see staying sober as core to their (re)integration.

For example, one respondent states,

From my part, it (key to success on the outside) will be not drinking. I don't do drugs, but alcohol is just as bad and every time I got in trouble it's been when I'm drinking. So I just need not to drink. If you went in and looked at all my stuff (convicted crimes) on the computer, you'd see that every single time I'd been drunk or drinking. If I'm not drinking, I'm fine. So I just got to not drink.

Several respondents also expect to face challenges with what many call “stigma.” While this is most often discussed in reference to the employment and housing hunt (explored with greater depth in Part Three), because the criminal record is seen as a clear barrier to permanent housing and a “real job,” some respondents anticipate more

general challenges with the stigma of being a felon in general, and an ex-prisoner specifically. A couple of respondents believe people will generally “look at them” differently, and stereotype them as dangerous because of their soon-to-be statuses as “ex-cons.”

Such discussions of stigma are emphasized more so by respondents who voluntarily tell me they are convicted of a sex crime, such as one prisoner who highlights his concern with adopting the title of “sex offender” on the outs,

The biggest challenge I will face once I’m released (will be) having people learn to accept me, especially with my situation where I’m a sex offender. I have to register and everything. I don’t expect people to just trust me when I walk out the gate. I don’t expect people to like me. It’s wrong for me to expect them to. I’ve got to walk out that gate knowing I’m going to have days that someone’s gonna say something to me that I’m not going to like. I have to understand that that’s just the way it’s going to be and through time people will learn to trust me. I think that’s my biggest challenge is earning that trust back.

Additionally, several participants highlight the importance of “finding new friends” and “avoiding old friends” on the outs. When probed on this topic, several respondents are quick to change their language and tell me they need avoid old “people” or “acquaintances” who were not “real friends” to begin with. Often, respondents equate avoiding such people with avoiding criminality or the pre-conditions of their criminality (e.g., avoiding people who drink). For those respondents who plan to return to old friendships on the outs, some tell me they plan to keep them “at a distance,” as many are concerned their friends will pull them back into their “old ways,” most notably alcohol and drug consumption.

Clearly, prisoners approaching the gate expect to face multiple, and often overlapping, challenges to “make it” on the outs. Parts Three and Four of this chapter advance my ideas of capital erosion and habitus adjustment that were detailed in Chapter III. Looking to the data, I consider the applicability of Bourdieu’s capital and habitus generally, and my emerging notions of erosion and adjustment specifically. Given that the interview protocol focuses more on housing and employment challenges, rather than the additional three challenges just listed, so too does a majority of my data. While I do not intend to undermine the significance of chemical addiction, stigmatization, or peer influence, I now depart from discussing them further. In the interest of scope and focus, I plant the following discussions of capital and habitus in data specifically pertaining to expected challenges with shelter and money.

### PART THREE: CAPITAL AND RELEASE

Data especially pertinent to the species of capital produce three key findings. First, there is evidence to support the notion that prison erodes capital. However, imprisonment does not erode all capital equally. Instead, data suggest economic and social capital is impacted the most. Second, although there seems to be limited ways prisoners can combat erosion, there appear to be *some* opportunities to maintain or accumulate capital behind bars. Lastly, in order to increase their chances of going straight, many soon-to-be-released prisoners appear to consciously invest in various forms of capital they perceive as specifically relevant for securing employment and housing on the outs. While there are varying degrees of motivation, most prisoners

approaching the gate seem to prepare for release by accumulating new capital or strengthening the capital eroded by their incarceration.

### **Economic Capital and Release**

Three findings suggest that prison erodes economic capital. First, several respondents, particularly those who say they were employed before they fell, note they will leave prison with less money than what they possessed when they arrived to prison. A few of these men argue this is partly due to the court fees accumulated during their defense and sentencing. Also, those prisoners who claim they were sole or partial “breadwinners” for their family predict their household income and wealth will be significantly lower at the time of release than it was at the beginning of their incarceration. During observations, a few prisoners also stress concerns that their debt will be higher following release, most notably because of their inability to pay child support from behind bars.

Second, data suggest that it is difficult, if not impossible, to accumulate economic capital while incarcerated. While several respondents note the importance of economic capital to their successful (re)integration, particularly in their hunt for permanent housing and their overarching goal to stay out of prison, these men also suggest there are little to no opportunities to accumulate economic capital from behind bars. While all prisoners in the state of Oregon are required to work while incarcerated (with some exceptions, such as those in specific drug treatment programs and those incapable of work), such employment generates roughly \$30 a month according to



interview respondents. This income is typically spent on goods from commissary, such as candy, instant coffee, CDs, and other items that improve the quality of prison life.

Third, for those few respondents who have some money or wealth on the outs, they argue that the maintenance of such capital is extremely difficult to manage from behind bars. For example, one convict, who is less than a month from being released after nearly five years of imprisonment, states he will have some money available to him once he is released. Early into his incarceration, he had a family member freeze his bank account, since he knew the maintenance of an account from inside prison is difficult, if not impossible.

For many of these men, the accumulation and maintenance of economic capital is said to be a task best adopted after their release. Thus, while many of these men strongly believe money will be a critical factor in going straight, they recognize that it is difficult to earn, save, and manage money from behind bars. Instead, soon-to-be-released prisoners invest in other capital species that may increase their chances of successful (re)integration.

### **Social Capital and Release**

Several respondents highlight the importance of having “social support” on the outs. Such support is often seen as a reason to go straight, or at least to stay out of prison. In a Road to Success course I observed the instructor warns against relapse, be it crime, alcohol, drugs, or another perceived “cause” to imprisonment, and states, “There shouldn’t be day you walk out of the house without a number of somebody to call.” The

importance of pro-social relations with family, friends, and occasionally support organizations (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous) are often highlighted as key to staying out of prison.

A self-admitted convicted sex offender describes the importance of social bonds to his success on the outs,

From my point of view, part of what got me in here was my lack of a social network, a lack of a social support. I was trying to do everything on my own. I became kind of recluse and stuck to myself. I think a big part of staying out is having some fellowship, people you can talk to, people you can rely on, be it friends, family, or whatever. But, somebody you can, even if it's just one person, somebody you can go to, that you can trust and you can tell them anything and they're there to help you. I think that's probably the most important thing when you get out.

Another prisoner describes how his parents motivate his success,

I blame my parents for the only reason why I do anything good. They take full responsibility for that. If I didn't have my friends and my family in the community I would have – I feel that I would be a lot less positive, because they are my incentive program. They're everything that I'm working towards.

Beyond providing pro-social moral support for soon-to-be-released prisoners, many respondents note how their social connections on the outs may help them secure various resources that will aid their (re)integration. For most of these men, such bonds may provide temporary shelter, a ride from the prison, or some cash. In this sense, social ties operate as a power resource, or a form of capital.

Social capital may have significance for soon-to-be-released prisoners' economic capital. There are a few examples of respondents tapping into their social network for

purposes of *maintaining* their economic worth, such as the prisoner whose mother helps maintain his mortgage payments and the prisoner whose family member froze his bank account. More often however, there are examples of respondents using, or intending to use, their social capital to spark the production of an honest income. This may manifest by a friend or family member planning to assist their soon-to-be-released loved one in completing the paperwork for food stamps or social security, but it most commonly emerges in the form of a social tie advocating for a soon-to-be-released prisoner in the labor market. Many respondents are presently tapping into, or plan to tap into, their social network for purposes of securing employment in the formal economy.

In addition to assisting with soon-to-be-released prisoners' employment hunt, social capital may be exchanged for housing. Some respondents intend to exchange their social capital for permanent housing, such as those who plan to move in with their family, friends, or significant others for the long-term. For other soon-to-be-released prisoners, such bonds may not provide permanent housing, but instead they may assist a soon-to-be-released prisoner's permanent housing hunt.

One 21 year old prisoner, who has been imprisoned since the age of 17, describes the importance of family to his release,

My uncle owns a landscaping business and he's giving me a guaranteed job the moment I get out because that was where I was working before I got locked up. He's giving me a guaranteed job the day I get out to work there until I find a job that – I intend to go into welding or construction of some sort. He's going to give me a job until I can stable myself with those....I've got a couple other family

members who have these jobs that they are going to try and put a good word in and give me all the applications and things like that. Without my family I really would be screwed because I really have no idea what to do. Like I said I was 17 (when I started this sentence). I have no idea how to be an adult.

Later in our conversation he says,

(My family is) setting everything up for me. They're getting me an apartment. They're buying me a vehicle....Once I get out I'll have everything ready for me to just start living. They're going to set me up with all of my bank accounts, my cell phones, my food stamps, my medical, all that stuff.

Admittedly, such a statement should be read cautiously as it addresses predictions of using social capital following release. In contrast, several soon-to-released prisoners provide examples of how they are currently using such capital to increase their chances of accessing housing and employment. One prisoner explains to me how his family is currently aiding his upcoming employment and housing hunt,

Respondent: When I get out I'm gonna be living with my mom. But like six months after that I'll probably chill, get on my feet, get my own apartment. She was already talking to her manager, because they have an open apartment, about holding an apartment for me. Me and my sister are going to move in there. Hopefully that works out. She's helping me get a job also.

Interviewer: What kind of job?

Respondent: ACE Hardware Store.

Interviewer: Your mom is going to help you hook that up?

Respondent: Yeah. She just came to see me not that long ago telling me that she was talking to the (apartment) manager about getting me an apartment right next to her with my sister. But, I was like 'I don't have no job' and then

the next week she came in and... she's going to talk to (my cousin's boss) about helping me get a job at the ACE Hardware Store.

While in prison, the channels for maintaining relationships with people on the outs are challenging. Several respondents stress how a 20 to 30 minute long distance phone call can cost about \$25. A standard "in-zone" local call, which is \$1.75 for 30 minutes, is also steep when budgeting such an expense against a fulltime prison job income (usually about \$30 to \$50 a month). Reasonably, several prisoners choose not to use the phone as a primary means of contact. Additionally, handwritten letters and in-person visits are recognized by several participants as burdensome for people on the outs, particularly for those people who live far away from the prison and do not have reliable transportation. Many prisoners note they only keep routine contact with a few people on the outs, and that many, if not most, of the social contacts they had prior to their incarceration have since weakened. Such data suggest that social capital deteriorates behind bars.

Soon-to-be-released prisoners are left with tapping into what social capital remains following erosion, occasionally leaving a close family member, a significant other, or a close friend. For some of these men, their social capital may be extremely low given they likely had little social capital when they fell (according to the literature). A few prisoners tell me they do not have family on the outs, or at least family that will aid them in their (re)integration. A couple of these family-less prisoners recognize the importance of social bonds and therefore plan to join support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous with the intention of expanding their social network, in addition to securing

social support to maintain sobriety. One respondent believes his involvement in such groups may spark potential job leads.

For those convicts who have ties with a few people on the outs, their investment in, and maintenance of, extra-prison social capital while behind bars may become problematic, as prisoners are often unable to adequately reciprocate favors. In addition to aiding with employment and housing hunts, some prisoners note their family members are stressed to put money on their books (inmate accounts) and run various errands. Several respondents note that there are few or no ways to balance favors with their connections on the outs.

One respondent describes how prisoners often put too many demands on their loved ones and how he tries to avoid becoming a burden,

You need to realize that the world is going on out there. They're busy out there and a lot of people put demands on their loved one's out there when it puts them (loved ones) in a bind. They (prisoners) don't even think about it. They don't think about maybe they're (loved ones) having a hard time with their bills, but they (prisoners) need money...I see that happening a lot. So, for me, I take it as I can get it and I appreciate when I can get it.

Wrestling with social capital erosion, some soon-to-be-released prisoners at CRCI turn to the Road to Success program. In several respects, the two shortest of the five Road to Success classes, "Your Family Your Release and Your Community" and "Working Effectively with Your PO" (roughly two-and-a-half hours each), attempt to teach strategies for negotiating social capital. The family course encourages students to reflect on how their incarceration has impacted their families (e.g., court fees, stigma of having

a loved one behind bars, and loss of income), and how their upcoming release will impact their household (e.g., burden of feeding and clothing an additional person and the impact of a returning father figure). The parole course encourages students to see parole officers as community resources and to reflect on the expectations of post-prison supervisors. Both courses encourage students to consider the viewpoint and expectations of others. Neither of these courses directly connect students to family members or parole officers, and therefore it is inaccurate to frame these courses as investing social capital among students. However, because these classes review topics such as empathy, it may be possible that students learn better ways to use and maintain their social capital, if such brief lessons succeed at impacting the attitudes and behaviors of students.

In summary, social capital is a core resource for many soon-to-be-released prisoners. Not only do social bonds motivate many of these men's desires to go straight, such connections may also have the potential to aid the (re)integration of these men once they are released, specifically with respect to securing those core perquisites and markers of the straight life (i.e., shelter and money). However, while incarcerated, prisoners often face many obstacles in maintaining their social capital, such as various contact barriers (e.g., expensive phone calls) and restraints in reciprocating favors.

### **Cultural Capital and Release**

As prisoners approach the gate, several are curious about the changes of the free world, particularly the technological changes they learn from television (e.g.,

commercials advertising smartphones) and changes to their hometown. While curious, most participants note that they are not worried about such changes being drastic, as most have been incarcerated for less than five years. Those respondents who do stress fear, uncertainty, or anxiety with using specific technology following their exit imply they were uncomfortable with such technology before they fell.

Nevertheless, there is some indication of cultural capital erosion with regard to technology. For example, one prisoner tries to maintain his familiarity with computers by regularly practicing his typing in a non-internet computer lab inside CRCI, but he claims that he has forgotten how to navigate the internet during his half-decade sentence. He says, “Now, I can’t even remember how to send an e-mail.” Similarly, another prisoner claims he was a computer “expert” before his incarceration. He now expects to walk out the gate as a computer “novice.”

On the flipside, prisoners may be accumulating some degree of cultural capital behind bars via educational programs provided by ODOC. Several respondents have received their GED or some other form of basic education training while in prison, either during their current sentence or during a previous one. Some prisoners also tell me about other educational services they received, such as one respondent who took a business class offered by a local community college. For the most part, such educational services are highlighted as valuable by interview respondents. As noted earlier, few of these men hope to attend a local community college upon release and tell me their financial aid paperwork is, or is nearly, complete.



Given that most respondents plan to seek employment following release, most interview conversations addressing cultural capital focus on labor skills. Some respondents say they gained no such skills behind bars. One prisoner responds to me asking if he thinks he acquired any job skills in prison by saying he learned “nothing, but being a better criminal.” Similarly, another prisoner tells me that he participated in numerous vocational programs in California prisons, including mechanical drafting and metal shop, and frames such programs as ineffective because the training is too basic. A few prisoners, however, do believe they gained some skills and knowledge pertinent to labor while behind bars. Some respondents note they have become firefighting or flagging (for construction) certified while doing time. Also, a couple of prisoners who work in the facility kitchen believe they acquired skills applicable to the restaurant market.

One respondent, an electronics repairman in the facility who also held a position in a prison kitchen, explains how his work ethic has improved behind bars,

Basically what I learned was regardless of the job, do it. If you're there do it. Do it right. Don't do just enough to get by and don't slack off and don't call into work because you don't feel like going to work that day. I got some general work ethics. I'm a completely different person than I was before when it comes to work ethics.

Thus, there appear to be some opportunities for soon-to-be-released prisoners to accumulate cultural capital that is particularly relevant to their upcoming (re)integration attempt. Several respondents highlight the value of gaining “tools” that are specifically applicable to their upcoming battles with employment and housing.

Most respondents from the opt-in group say they acquire such tools from the Road to Success program, specifically the employment, housing, and budget and finance courses.

The employment class is the longest and most detailed of the five Road to Success classes. This six week course (approximately 15 hours of class time) requires students to complete a workbook, participate in class discussions, and complete a number of in-class exercises and out-of-class assignments. The curriculum reviews employers' expectations (i.e., the behavior and attitudes of a good employee) and practical strategies for securing employment after imprisonment. Most interview respondents highlight the latter of the two objectives, securing employment, as the most memorable and valuable.

In the employment class, students develop a resume by checking boxes and filling in relevant information on a "Resume Information Form" in the workbook. After submitting this form, which asks students to handwrite contact information, educational history, employment history, qualifications, relevant skills, and volunteer experience, transitional service staff generate a typed resume. In addition to receiving paper copies of their resumes, students may also receive a digital file saved on a CD upon request. Observations suggest that the resume building process is challenging for some prisoners who struggle to remember the contact information of previous employers and can be extremely stressful for those students who have never held a job in the formal economy.

Also in the employment class, students review interview strategies and each student completes a video recorded mock interview. Prior to completing the mock interview, students read and discuss various interview topics, such as eye-contact, informal conversation topics (e.g., talking football to build rapport), how to discuss employment history, and how to address one's criminal history in an interview. Following the mock interview, students observe, comment, and critique all recorded interviews and provide constructive criticism to their peers. Most observed points of criticism focus on prisoners' lack of professional body posture or their inability to "sound professional."

Transitional staff routinely stress throughout the employment class to "own your crime," "keep discussions of criminal history brief," and always end such discussions with "a positive" when talking about criminal convictions in a job interview. In other words, students are discouraged from giving "excuses," such as "I had a crappy lawyer" or "My crime wasn't that bad." Instead, they are encouraged to give statements like "I made some poor decisions in my life" and "There's not a day I don't think about my mistakes and how they affect me, my victim(s), and my family." In addition to admitting responsibility, students are discouraged from giving detailed explanations of their criminal record and are charged to end such discussions with pro-social statements such as, "I made a change in my life when I was in prison" and "This job can help me succeed."

One prisoner describes the benefits of the employment class in general, and the interview strategy material in particular,

I didn't know how to express to somebody that just because I'm a felon, (it) doesn't mean that I'll be a bad employee. I just finished my employment class. I graduated Tuesday from it...We did mock interviews. We video taped em'. I got to learn how to tell an employer, an interviewer, that I have a felony but turn it. It's kinda like a sandwich deal. You put down a positive about yourself, another small positive and then you say 'Well I have a felony. I made a mistake when I was 17. I made some really bad choices, but—' and then you wheel em' in with a whole bunch of 'I went to counseling for two and a half years...I've held down multiple (prison) jobs and I've never been fired from any of them.'"

Most respondents involved in the employment class believe course material has some educational value (either for themselves or other prisoners), such as this prisoner who highlights the educational value of the class,

I ended up taking the employment class, and just (by) going through that I learned so much. I hope I have to take an interview, just to test out my skills and see if I'm ready. Just by going through that class I think I'll be prepared for interviews...I think I'm going to be ready to find me a job.

The housing class, which includes two morning and two afternoon sessions, is fit into two days (approximately 9 hours of course work). The curriculum covers specific permanent housing strategies with respect to both securing and maintaining such housing. The course reviews various topics from the seemingly intuitive differences between a rental deposit and a rental fee to more complicated explanations of federal and state landlord-tenant law. Other topics covered in the course include: instructions for completing rental applications, cleaning and home maintenance standards, and how to write a tenant's notice to vacate. Similar to the employment class, there is an exceptional amount of time spent on how to present one's self to a potential landlord

(e.g., “dress for success”) and how to address one’s criminal record throughout the application process.

Many respondents who took the housing class highlight a few key lessons from the course. One such lesson discourages students from paying an application fee for a rental unless they are confident they will be admitted. According to the course, such confidence of admission may be weighed by explicitly asking two questions, “What is your screening criteria?” and “How many people are applying for this apartment?” By law, landlords and apartment managers must explain their screening criteria upon request. Also, according to transitional staff, those landlords and managers who are accepting of felons will most likely prefer to admit a non-felon if given a choice.

Another lesson of the housing course encourages students to apply to “smaller” and “family owned” rental properties, rather than large corporate apartment complexes. Transitional staff explain that large corporate complexes are likely to deny felons because they run a strict system of admission procedures, as opposed to smaller and less formally organized rentals where there is more “wiggle room” to negotiate. Therefore, students are encouraged to target rental opportunities where they will have an opportunity to explain their criminal background (by “owning the crime”) face-to-face with a landlord.

One convict summarizes this lesson,

Criminal record is going to play a big part (for housing), but, like employment, it’s going to be the kind of situation where I’m going to have to find a guy that owns a small apartment complex that is willing to hear me out and hear

what I have to say or a guy that owns a house or something.

All prisoners who volunteer for the housing class must also take the budget and finance class, which is a one-day course (roughly five-and-a-half hours). The curriculum reviews multiple topics from the “average” costs of living on the outs (e.g., \$500 for rent, \$200 food, \$60 electricity, and \$35 supervision fees) to the typical monthly “take home” (i.e., wage income after taxes) of a fulltime minimum wage worker (\$1,000) and the standard monthly assistance (\$200 food stamps) available to a released prisoner in Oregon. Exercises and worksheets simulate money management practices and stress the importance of saving. One of the key lessons in the class highlighted by several respondents is “Always pay your rent first.” Maintaining shelter is framed as the most important expenditure. In several respects, the budget and finance class attempts to inform students on how to use economic capital following release. The skills acquired in this course (assuming it is effective, and many respondents believe it is to an extent) are embodied cultural capital. The course attempts to transmit a knowledge on how navigating the formal economy.

Overall, these three courses (Employment, Housing, and Budget and Finance) may be understood as the penitentiary’s attempt to invest cultural capital among soon-to-be-released prisoners. Similar to how many educational and vocational programs in prison aim to teach academic and employment skills easily interpreted as embodied cultural capital (e.g., reading, writing, and typing), the Road to Success classes also aim to invest embodied cultural capital among students. However, the cultural capital

accumulated in the Road to Success courses (assuming such accumulation is successful) are specifically relevant to securing the core components of the straight life, namely employment in the formal economy and permanent housing.

Additionally, these classes promote a form of embodied cultural capital that may best be described as “bureaucratic know-how.” Firstly, several class exercises review strategies for quickly and effectively *interpreting* various documents on the outs, such as rental agreements and credit card offers. Secondly, many activities review strategies for *completing* various forms, such as job applications and checking deposit forms, on the outs. Thirdly, some exercises cover strategies for *producing* certain documents, such as a tenant’s notice to vacate. These classes also give tips on how to navigate the bureaucratic world. For example, transitional staff review the “best” ways to request credit reports and the primary steps to renew a driver’s license.

It is important to emphasize that not all respondents recognize the Road to Success courses as valuable. Those in the opt-out group, in particular, generally believe that such classes are irrelevant to their upcoming (re)integration attempt. These men often claim the Road to Success classes are incapable of teaching them anything useful, because they already “know what it takes” to successfully transition back into the community. Even a couple respondents in the opt-in group question the value of the courses. They too view these lessons as powerless to their individual (re)integration attempt, and tell me they opted-in to “kill time.” However, all of the respondents who question the value of the Road to Success classes note such courses are somewhat

valuable for other prisoners, particularly for those who never held a job or lived on their own.

In summary, data suggest evidence for both cultural capital reduction and accumulation. As a consequence of being out of touch with the free world, prisoners may lose, or miss the opportunity to gain, certain skills (e.g., internet navigation). However, given that most respondents were living on the outs less than a five years ago, many do not stress much concern with returning to free world technology. Additionally, there is evidence to suggest prisoners at CRCI in general, and CRCI's soon-to-be-released prisoners in particular, have some opportunities to secure cultural capital relevant to their (re)integration while behind bars.

### **Symbolic Capital, Reputability, and Release**

Many soon-to-be-released prisoners see their reputability, or there lack thereof, as a major barrier in their upcoming job and rental hunts. Some respondents highlight a general concern that potential employers and landlords may personally not trust or like an ex-prisoner. However, most see their criminal record as the strongest and most direct assault on their reputability. Several believe their criminal record will spark a quick dismissal during the employment and property rental screening processes.

One prisoner highlights his recent attempt to secure permanent housing before his exit,

The biggest obstacle for me as far as the housing goes is the fact that I have a felony, (even though) I have great credit and I have a really good rental history with



references and letters and everything....There are some places, like I contacted the Clock Tower a couple of months ago and so did my mom about renting to me and they said 'If you have any felony what so ever we will not take you in' and there's a lot of complexes like that.

Several respondents are also concerned about the impact their criminal record will have on their upcoming job hunt. Similar to discussions on seeking permanent housing with a criminal record, several respondents fear their criminal record will prevent them from passing the screening criteria for many employers.

One prisoner states,

Once I'm released, my biggest challenge is, I would say finding a job. Finding a job. Because, I don't care what nobody says it's hard to get a job as a felon.

Later, in our conversation he emphasizes the general challenges of having a felony conviction,

Being a felon is you're really pretty much done with life. I mean, it's my own fault...I'm not going to blame society, but they have it that way. Once you're a felon, that's a wrap for you. You're done.

Another commonly anticipated battle with reputability concerns employment and rental histories. Many of the prisoners I observed stress they are nervous about the holes punctured through their employment and rental histories as a result of their incarceration. Additionally, some of these men are also concerned about the poor employment and rental histories they acquired before they fell. Some convicts note they have no employment history or no rental history because they never held a "real job" or

rented property under their name. While observing the employment class, I often heard prisoners state they have no “over the table” job experience.

While many respondents believe their criminal record and poor (or no) rental and employment histories will reduce their chances of securing permanent housing and employment on the outs, data suggest many soon-to-be-released prisoners take proactive steps to increase their reputability and combat the inevitable stigma of becoming an “ex-con.” As noted earlier in this chapter, prisoners may secure a GED or some industry-specific credentials (e.g., flagging certificate). Several respondents, however, point to two other ways to increase reputability while behind bars, securing in-prison program completion certificates and collecting professional references.

Penitentiary program completion certificates are given to prisoners who complete various treatment, rehabilitation, or transitional programs. While some respondents discuss such certificates from a drug and alcohol treatment program in the facility, most conversations on certificates are limited to those given by the Road to Success program. Six certificates are available from these classes, one from each of the five courses and one for completing the series in full (see Appendix H for example). Many prisoners highlight plans to use these certificates to battle their disreputability in one, two, or all, of three areas: the job hunt, the housing hunt, and parole. These men see these documents as “proof” that they “did something” behind bars and that they are serious about succeeding on the outs.

One respondent, a 40 year old roughly two months to the gate, provides a hypothetical example of how he will use his program certificates during his job hunt,

An employer is going to want to know what have you done for the last three years. An employer is going to want to know, 'Ok well you're a felon, what did you learn? What have you done the whole time that you've been in prison to assure me that you're not going to go out and steal a car out of the parking lot one day after work?'

He changes his voice and imitates a response,

'Oh well, ok I've completed 15 programs and I have certificates from program completion while I've been down. This is what I've done.'

Another prisoner weighs the value of the Road to Success certificates on the outs,

All it is is something that says 'Hey I did this.' That's all you get out of it. But, when you're going to people, like when you're going to your POs and you're going to who you're trying to rent from, anything you can show them that shows a positive aspect of the negative experience that you've gone through is gonna help.

In addition to securing credentials and certificates, some respondents discuss the importance of securing professional references as a means of battling disreputability. Respondents generally highlight letters written by staff from behind bars, such as prison-job supervisors or program coordinators. Also, some prisoners note plans to secure references from specific individuals on the outs, most notably parole officers, halfway house staff, and post-prison treatment and support leaders (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous sponsor).

During an employment class one prisoner asks the instructor in the front of his peers "What do I do for references?" He continues, "I don't have references. I was a bad worker." Another prisoner from across the room volunteers an answer and suggests

asking for a letter from one or more of the following people: a church leader, penitentiary program staff, and a parole officer.

In summary, most respondents see their criminal record and their upcoming statuses as ex-cons as barriers in securing an honest income and long term shelter. However, several of these men see some opportunities to battle their disreputability by securing “proof” that they at least tried to better themselves in prison (e.g., GED, program certificates, and staff references). Thus, while behind bars, some convicts secure symbolic capital they believe will dilute the “stigma” (as many participants call it) of their incarceration. Some of these men plan to continue this pattern following release, by securing references from parole officers for example, in an attempt to further increase their chances of accessing employment and housing.

#### PART FOUR: HABITUS AND RELEASE

Although most respondents state they have been incarcerated for a relatively short amount of time, there is some evidence to suggest the prison is a secondary site of socialization impacting the structure of habitus. While it is difficult to clearly identify incarceration’s impact on the effects of habitus (i.e., action, thought, and perception), given that I did not collect data on any of these men before they fell, there are some participant accounts regarding prison’s ability to “change” people.

Most respondents claim that being imprisoned at least changed their attitudes about prisons and prisoners. Some note that before they fell, they held a misperception that all prisoners were “bad guys.” According to these men, once imprisoned, they soon

learned not all prisoners are hyper-violent and that many are in fact doing time on non-violent charges. Nevertheless, several participants claim they have become more cynical and distrustful of people in general. Also, some interviewees, particularly those coming down from higher security level prisons, argue they have become desensitized to interpersonal conflict since they have been exposed to sometimes brutal levels of violence.

One respondent reflects on his experience being incarcerated in a maximum-security prison for the first time,

I've seen dudes fight. I've seen dudes get stabbed. I just got there right after they had killed this guy in the recording studio up stairs. They cut him open and pulled his guts out and then just dumped him into a trash bag. And, just to be 18, I just got there and to see the things that I've seen, it just was mind blowing. I think it kinda like changed me. I've never been the same since.

A few convicts also note how prisons have an ability to institutionalize, but no respondents admit that they themselves are “institutionalized.” Instead, many claim they know of prisoners incarcerated for long periods of time who are dependent on the “three hots and a cot” structured lifestyle of imprisonment and predict such prisoners will experience incredibly high levels of disorientation upon release. Less overtly however, some respondents believe there is a standard and natural feeling of disorientation among everybody once they are released, and it is generally understood the degree of such disorientation positively correlates with the length of one’s sentence. One respondent, who has been released from a prison a few times before, says,

“(When) you get out, you’re so glad to get out, your head is just spinning when you first get out. People actually do get out and kiss the ground.”

Some predict they will feel out-of-place in the free world, at least during the initial hours, days, or months following their exit. For example, several students in the employment class note how it is somewhat uncomfortable to “speak professionally” (e.g., avoid prisoner slang and institutional jargon) during mock interviews. Some prisoners also believe that adapting to the free world way of life, such as having more freedom and privacy, will feel odd immediately after release and will require some adjustment.

A 19 year old first timer stresses his concerns with adapting to life on the outs,

My mom asked me ‘What do you want for dinner (after release)?’ I don’t know what I want for dinner because the last such-and-such years it’s been planned out every single day. Here, we don’t use very much of our brains because everything is so scheduled and it’s so planed out. You’re limited everything. You’re limited clothes, limited shoes, limited food. We have the same food over-and-over-and-over just (on) different days. I think that readapting with everything out there with things moving so fast – ridding in car – I think that that will be a big thing.

The pragmatic goals of soon-to-be-released prisoners also shed light on habitus by framing reasonable perceptions of the future and by providing some insight into taste. As outlined earlier in this chapter, all respondents express a fundamental desire to stay out of prison and most of these men they see this occurring by going straight. Those who hope to adopt the straight life do not anticipate dramatic upward social mobility. Instead, they want to position themselves in the working class, generally as a

low skill worker (e.g., a retail salesman) or as a technical tradesman (e.g., an electrician). In addition to wanting a decent job and a safe place to live, many interviewees highlight other life goals, such as purchasing a dependable vehicle and occasionally eating out. Similar to the working class in general, most of these men have a taste for necessity, rather than a taste for luxury.

### Conclusion

In summary, data regarding soon-to-be-released prisoners' predictions of, and preparations for, release suggest these men typically want to adopt an honest working class lifestyle. The adoption of this lifestyle, sometimes referred to as "going straight," is typically seen as requiring, at bare minimum, a safe place to live and an honest income.

Data suggest many prisoners will be released with low levels of capital. Findings point the existence of capital erosion with respect to economic and social capital in particular, as several respondents anticipate leaving prison with less money and wealth and weaker social bonds. Many of these men will also be released with seemingly low levels of cultural capital, specifically with regard to academic background and labor market skills. However, some prisoners may receive a GED or some form of basic education, potentially increasing their cultural capital somewhat. These men will be released with a criminal background, an official mark of disreputability, which many participants believe will have a negative impact on their attempts to secure employment and housing.

As prisoners approach the gate, many appear to invest in various species of capital they believe will increase their chances of successful (re)integration. This process

is most evident with social capital, as many respondents highlight several ways that close family and friends will aid their transition. Additionally, many of the respondents in the opt-in group claim they acquire new “tools” for succeeding on the outs, such as interview strategies and budgeting tips. Also, in an attempt to battle the disreputable marks of the criminal record and their upcoming statuses as ex-cons, many respondents secure penitentiary program completion certificates and references from reputable individuals (forms of symbolic capital) to improve their reputation.

Lastly, while there is limited data addressing habitus, there is some evidence to suggest prison acts as a secondary socialization site influencing disposition. In particular, some data suggest imprisonment changes actions, thoughts, and perceptions (effects of habitus), and therefore may imply prisons change habitus. Additionally, by analyzing respondents’ practical life goals, I conclude these men have a taste for necessity rather than a taste for luxury. The next and final chapter will critically assess the value of both my findings and my methods, as well as position my thesis in a broader literary context.



## **CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In this next and final chapter I close my thesis. The first of five sections summarize how my data answers my research questions. In the second section, I outline the strengths and weaknesses of my methodological approach and data. I address the theoretical implications of the preceding chapters in the third section. Here, my emergent notions of capital erosion and habitus adjustment are summarized. In the fourth section, I briefly review facts and figures regarding prison release in Oregon and beyond in an attempt to estimate what the men from the previous chapter can expect with regard to their upcoming (re)integration attempt. Lastly, I argue that further theoretical and empirical labor be given to the period immediately following release, a time I informally title the “buffer zone.” Pulling from my ideas on erosion and adjustment, I introduce a closing hypothesis that I hope will ignite further exploration.

### **Understandings of, and Preparations for, Release**

In the front of theoretical backdrop framing the prison as an institution that exacerbates existing patterns of social inequality, this thesis pulls from ethnographic data to explore two questions: “How do soon-to-be-released prisoners understand their upcoming release?” and “How do soon-to-be-released prisoners prepare for their upcoming release?” My application of Bourdieu’s thinking tools, as located in both my data and the existing literature on imprisonment and release, has motivated my discussion of erosion and adjustment. Together, these ideas shed light on the

mechanisms by which inequality is worsened via imprisonment and provides context for how soon-to-be-released prisoners understand and prepare for their upcoming exit.

*Understandings:*

With respect to understandings of release, men at CRCI often approach the gate with combinations of excitement, fear, and uncertainty. All the men I interview stress a fundamental desire to stay out of prison. For most, this means the adoption of what is sometimes called the “straight life.” While soon-to-be-released prisoners conceive post-prison success in different ways, participants frequently highlight an honest income and permanent housing as necessary and definitive components for going straight.

Most of the men that I spoke with at CRCI highlight the importance of resources in succeeding on the outs and attaining the straight life. According to their worldview, the objectives of post-prison success clearly require an exchange or use of resources, be they economic, social, or cultural. In particular, money, support (via friends, family, or organized support group), and knowledge (e.g., of where and how to apply for work) are seen as critical for going straight. However, many of these men expect to exit prison without enough resources, or what might reasonably be titled “capital,” to secure permanent housing or an honest income.

Data regarding understandings of release also suggest that months or years of imprisonment have, for the most part, eroded the capital of my participants. Reflecting on their opportunities at the point of release, many respondents provide verbal accounts of how their economic value and resources have declined (e.g., pulled from the labor market and increased debt) and how their extra-prison social network has

deteriorated. However, this apparent erosion of economic and social capital is not fully complemented by a process of cultural capital erosion. Rather, data suggest both this species' erosion (e.g., by being out of touch with changing technology and free world labor) and investment (e.g., potentially building intellectual skills through educational or related programs). In terms of reputability, which I liken to a form of symbolic capital, many respondents strongly believe imprisonment has reduced their status. The durable and formal status of "convicted felon," coupled with the soon-to-be informal title of "ex-con," are seen by many participants as a primary barrier to accessing employment, housing, and other items of an integrated lifestyle. This decay of reputation and honor is suggestive of symbolic capital erosion. Therefore, while it is clear that people entering the prison are already low in the species of capital, examination at ground level illustrates how those low in power nevertheless lose power through imprisonment.

My notion of habitus adjustment is less supported in my data than erosion. Regardless, participant reflections on how imprisonment "changed" them suggest a reconfiguration of thought, perception, and action as a consequence of incarceration. This suggests an adjustment of disposition. When visualizing release, several participants anticipate a conflict between the lifestyle of incarcerate and the conditions of the free world. The rapid increase in freedom and privacy that accompany release, if nothing else, seem strange to many of the men I spoke to.

#### *Preparations:*

Inching toward the gate, soon-to-be-released prisoners appear to tap into what low levels of capital remain following erosion and/or invest in new capital for

(re)integrative purposes. With respect to social capital, a handful of participants tell me their close family members are already advocating for them on the labor and long-term property-rental markets. Some respondents also note how they are participating in specific programs, namely education and transitional courses, to increase skill and knowledge applicable to the straight life (e.g., job interview strategies, computer skills, renters etiquette). This may be understood as a strategy to build a small amount of cultural capital and combat the erosion of skill and knowledge (as they pertain to legitimate culture) that usually accompanies imprisonment. Additionally, many participants take steps to dilute their soon-to-be status as “ex-cons” by increasing reputability. At CRCI, this most commonly manifests through soon-to-be-released prisoners asking their prison-job supervisor for letters of recommendation and collecting certificates by completing penitentiary programs. These may reasonably be deemed strategies to combat erosion.

Such preparations are not surprising considering those who opt-in for the Road to Success curriculum are encouraged, and given specific strategies through their coursework, to overcome hurdles that limit successful transition. However, even opt-out participants discuss the strategies they are currently using, or are planning to use, during their final months to increase their chances of going straight. Although the men I spoke to and observed do not see the prison in terms of capital or the other theoretical tools I employ, they nevertheless seem to adopt particular strategies to combat erosion.

It is however critical to note that erosion is likely far stronger than any behind bar attempts to increase capital worth. Consider the above examples that address

symbolic capital. The felony conviction, the holes punctured in employment and rental histories, and the undesirable mark of (ex-)con (forms of symbolic capital erosion) that are all equipped with a prison sentence certainly have a stronger impact on one's reputation than any behind bar attempts to increase reputability by means of collecting prison-job recommendation letters or penitentiary offered program certificates (forms of symbolic capital investment). In other words, the "negative credential" of the criminal record, to use Pager's (2007) words, and the "informal stigma" of imprisonment, to borrow Irwin's (1970) phrase, without doubt hold more weight than a penitentiary offered program certificate or a prison-job letter of reference.

An additional point must also be taken into account. Although these identified preparations suggest that many soon-to-be-released prisoners take pro-active steps to increase their chances of success on the outs, there are clear limitations to this assessment. I simply note how these men invest or maintain capital during their final months and how they intend to use it for (re)integrative purposes. My data does not provide any insight into how effective such resources will be in aiding the adoption of the straight life.

Nevertheless, these data are a healthy reminder of the agency of soon-to-be-released prisoners. When noting the conditions of liberty and privacy deprivation innate to imprisonment, in addition to the general lack of opportunities available to those caught by the penal dragnet, it is easy to neglect prisoner agency. And while these findings may face powerful limitations with regard to transferability, they ultimately demonstrate how many of my participants consciously take steps to increase (according

to their worldview) their chances of going straight. This adds to Petersilia's (2009) claim that prisoners approaching release have an authentic desire to succeed. Not only do these men want to succeed, many also engage in strategies they see as aiding that success.

### **Methodological Considerations**

My data, and more specifically the strategies I employed to collect that data, are equipped with inherent patterns of strengths and weaknesses. As a subjectivist technique, ethnographic inquiry typically has high levels of validity, as collected data are generally rich with detail. However, because ethnographers investigate the social world by means of depth (as opposed to breadth), they often face limitations in terms of reliability. The small number of cases that run parallel to an investigation of depth may also produce challenges when attempting to develop generalizable, or transferable, statements. However, this is also dependent on specific characteristics of the population and setting studied. In this brief section, I consider the specific strengths and weaknesses of my research by weighing levels of validity, reliability, and transferability.

There are particular limitations to my research. Given that I am the sole researcher in this project, I lack inter-coder reliability. Both my data and the report of my findings are highly dependent on my subjective worldview. I also face limitations with transferability. Prisons in America vary dramatically across states and regions, and so do departments of corrections. For example, a single site study of soon-to-be-released prisoners in a minimum-security men's prison in Oregon, with most

participants involved in a unique pre-release program, may hold few implications for those soon-to-be-released prisoners in a maximum-security men's prison in Louisiana with no pre-release program. In addition, CRCI is a unique prison in Oregon and the nation since it houses only prisoners who will be released in the next four years. While this makes CRCI an ideal location to explore my research questions, it is important to note that my participants' understandings and preparations for release may not represent men approaching the gate at facilities with prisoners further away from release. CRCI is unique in that relatively all its prisoners see "light at the end of the tunnel." Also, the race demographics of both my sample and Oregon prisoners are much whiter than national incarceration trends (roughly ten percent black and 40 percent black respectively).

Nevertheless, I took proactive steps to counterbalance these risks. I intentionally dispersed my 20 interviews and 45 hours of observation over a five-month period to increase stability reliability. This allowed me to witness some of the seasonal changes of the environment (e.g., winter has less "yard time" than summer). My employment of strategies partially rooted in objectivism, such as using semi-structured interviews, aimed to combat the inherently low levels reliability in ethnography. And, while my challenges with transferability are great, hyperincarceration in Oregon is nevertheless comparable to other states, specifically with respect to the incarceration rates of blacks (as noted in Chapter V, blacks are incarcerated at a rate that is nearly six times greater than whites both in Oregon and the nation).

Ultimately, I envision my results as having *some* implications for most prisoners being released in early twenty-first century America, but the strength of such implications vary with my findings being more transferable to those soon-to-be-released prisoners housed in a facility with one or more of the following characteristics: men-only, minimum-security, for prisoners serving their final years, a roughly 70 percent white and 30 percent black composition of prisoners, located in an urban area, and located in a state with a social climate (e.g., race demographics) and a political setting (e.g., a combination of “get tough laws” like Oregon’s Measure 11, but with a stronger-than-average bias towards convict rehabilitation) comparable to Oregon. Potential criticism that my sample is non-representative and too small to provide a foundation for making claims about the general imprisonment and release experience (a clear assault on ethnographic methods more broadly) certainly hold weight, but it is important to note that there is often a give-and-take relationship between inquires of depth and inquires of breadth. While generalizability is problematic, my findings hold a degree of richness that can *only* be located through qualitative methods. This thesis is fundamentally an exploration, and both my findings and theoretical arguments beg further investigation in other prisons and with other methods.

### **Theory Advancement**

Chapter II detailed the theoretical blueprint I used to guide the remaining chapters. Bourdieu’s thinking tools were employed to organize the existing literature on imprisonment and release (Chapter III), operationalize core elements of my research



(Chapter IV), and present my findings (Chapter V). His relational method inspired my methodological and analytical strategies throughout the preceding three chapters and his general claims regarding power and reproduction lead me ask critical questions about imprisonment and release practices in America. Early on I turned to Wacquant's writings on hyperincarceration to locate the prison in relation to the field of power. After which, I explored three theoretical questions ("What is the capital worth of incoming prisoners?" "Does imprisonment impact the distribution of capital?" and "Does the prison impact habitus?") in an effort contribute to a growing Bourdieuan analysis of punishment and inequality in America. Here, I end the conversation I staged between Bourdieu, the literature on imprisonment and release, and my data, by reflecting on my application of the three thinking tools.

*Fields, Integration, and American Hierarchy:*

Bourdieu's field is a practical theoretical tool to use when exploring processes of prison release. Presently under the strongest grip of the state, soon-to-be-released prisoners inch closer to a weaker, but nevertheless powerful, form of continued state panopticism, parole. Roughly 820,000 people are under parole supervision in the U.S., over 22,000 of which are in Oregon (Glaze and Bonczar 2010).<sup>46</sup> Following release from prison, parolees are generally expected to check in with a parole agent within 24 hours, report changes of address, not travel more than 50 miles from home, submit to search from police and parole officers, and comply to many more surveillance oriented

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<sup>46</sup> In fact, Oregon has the fifth highest parole rate in the U.S. with 754 per 100,000 adult residents in Oregon under parole supervision at the end of 2009, much higher than Oregon's neighbors of California (383 per 100,000) and Washington (128 per 100,000) (Glaze and Bonczar 2010).

stipulations (Petersilia 2003:82). Released prisoners are still firmly held by the punitive “Right hand” of governance described by Bourdieu (1999) and extended by Wacquant (2009).

The prison conviction, and the felony record in general, may be understood as a legitimate act of symbolic violence. Nearly four percent of the U.S. adult male population and 11 percent of the adult male black population are former prisoners, and when adding the number of current prisoners and parolees, these figures expand to roughly six percent and 17 percent respectively (Uggen et al. 2006). The criminal record is legitimate proof and identification of “(ex-)offender.” As prisoners walk out the gate they forcibly adopt the official category of “criminal,” or at best “former-criminal.” Because such a status is officiated by the state and accepted by the public, these men face varying degrees of formal and informal socio-civic exclusion. Such exclusion is justified by various parties (e.g., employers and landlords) as reasonable practices of discretion.

Most soon-to-be-released prisoners claim that they want, and will attempt, to enter the formal labor market and the state usually charges them to do so as a condition of their parole. However, in addition to facing challenges of being formally othered, ex-prisoners may lack the capital necessary to enter the labor market sector of the economic field. Bourdieu and Wacquant’s (1992:107-9) discussion of a “capital admission fee,” is applicable here. Securing a job often requires particular amounts of symbolic capital (e.g., employment history, credentials, and proper identification), social capital (e.g., professional references), cultural capital (e.g., a knowledge of how to

successfully navigate the interview drama and how to complete bureaucratic forms), and even economic capital (e.g., to pay for interview clothes and fund transportation to an interview) at the point of admission. Barriers to employment, and an honest income in general, lead to other post-prison integration challenges and hurdles, because access to permanent housing is almost always dependent on a legitimate position in the formal economy (e.g., proof of income and a rental deposit).

Generally, prisoners walk out the gate with less opportunities than when they arrived to prison, which were already low. In the material and symbolic hierarchy, the released prisoner is positioned in a particular intersection of marginalization in the so-called “matrix of inequality.” A majority are at the bottom of an economic and class stratification, as most live at or near poverty. Many are also at the bottom of the ethnoracial hierarchy, given that prisoners, and subsequently ex-prisoners, are disproportionately black and Latino. Following their incarceration, all exiting prisoners are pushed further down towards the pit of a moral hierarchy as they are legitimately categorized as “(ex-)offender.” Wacquant (2009:186) describes this as “triple stigma,” because the released prisoner is typically demonized for violating moral (he broke the law), economic (he is likely poor), and caste (he is likely non-white) order.

#### *Towards a Theory of Capital Erosion:*

Together, chapters III and V pull from existing literature and my data to suggest that prisons erode the capital worth of individuals and groups. This exploration reasonably requires a thinking exercise in which imprisonment specifically, but also incarceration more broadly, is considered an independent variable and capital worth a

dependent variable. Both the literature and my data are *suggestive* of causal relationship wherein imprisonment produces a decline in capital at the levels of the individual (for the prisoner), the collective (for his family and his neighborhood), and the quasi-collective (for his demographic category).

When using Bourdieu's species of capital to operationalize this dependent variable, it is evident that those who come to prison are already low in capital, but those who exit prison appear to be even lower. In comparison to the general adult U.S. population, incoming prisoners are poorer, have lesser and weaker "pro-social bonds," are less educated, and lack reputability in terms of their demographic standings (e.g., dangerous blacks and lazy poor). Overall, those who come to prison are low in the species of capital. At the same time, soon-to-be-released prisoners appear to have even lower levels of capital, as is evident with the participants in my study who expect to be released with less money, fewer social connections, and diminished skills in comparison to what they held when they started their sentence. The obvious exception here is with education, in which many prisoners increase their educational status from "high school dropout" to "GED recipient." However, such an increase in either intellectual skill (embodied cultural capital) or credential marketability in the labor market (symbolic capital) is probably low and is most likely trumped by the erosion of cultural capital (e.g., sparked by being out of touch with free world labor and technology advances) and the erosion of symbolic capital (e.g., the imposition of a felony conviction).

On its face, my overall claim is not unique. In fact, this is more or less a nuanced way in answering "yes" to Wakefield and Uggen's (2010) question: Does imprisonment

cause inequality? Such an answer is held with near consensus in contemporary sociology, with scholars peering through various theoretical lenses, including life course theory (e.g., Western 2006), Marxism (e.g., Reiman and Leighton 2010), Weber's notion of status (e.g., Pager 2007), and other paradigms. However, few have explored incarceration and punishment through the lens of capital as a principle of stratification.

When bringing capital in conversation with punishment, not only is the relationship between imprisonment and capital worth (i.e., the general claim that prisons erode capital) explored, such a conversation also addresses issues regarding (re)integration. In this respect, I move further away from capital as a principle (or at least an indicator) of stratification and closer towards capital as a power resource. Petersilia (2003;2009) points to several barriers to post-prison (re)integration including surveillance-oriented parole, mental illness, and chemical addiction, but many of her highlighted barriers emphasize a lack (or considerably low amounts) of resources such as money, social support, identification, and educational credentials. From a Bourdieuan perspective, these are indicators of capital that are emergent in various forms, or species. If it is true that successful (re)integration, or going straight, is dependent on permanent housing and an honest income, and that these markers/perquisites require the use of particular amounts and structures of capital, then capital erosion may have disintegrative effects. Thus, a theory of capital erosion is not simply a theory of perpetuating inequality, it is also a theory of perpetuating disintegration, presuming that such a divorce between stratification and integration can be made.

I must also admit that applying a general notion of capital is not uncommon within the core literature on incarceration in America, nor is a discussion of prisons eroding capital completely new. In highlighting the social profile of incoming prisoners, Wakefield and Uggen (2010:393) state, “prisons tend to house those with the least human capital, financial capital, and social capital.” Also, in his discussion of this so-called “human capital” (generally referring to individual productivity in an economic setting), Western (2006:113) suggests that incarceration can erode the job skills of incarcerates, and that employers know, and therefore act, on this generalization when making hiring and promotion decisions with ex-prisoners.

However, Bourdieu’s species of capital, as an exercise in the relational method and a component of the theoretical perspective sometimes called “field theory,” can contribute to the discussion of punishment and inequality by providing a solid framework for locating capital and understanding its principles of use. When analyzing the relationship between capital and imprisonment from Bourdieu’s perspective, I quickly notice that the discussions of capital employed by Wakefield and Uggen (2010) and Western (2006:113) fail to account for the importance of cultural capital. Prisoners and ex-prisoners face more challenges than simply low labor market skills (i.e., human capital). They also face challenges in navigating some of the simplest channels of legitimate culture. For example, many lack a bureaucratic know-how with respect to interpreting and completing paperwork. This transcends activities of the labor market and is suggestive of other barriers to (re)integration. A certain amount of bureaucratic knowledge is also needed when securing permanent housing. The limited concept of

human capital does not necessarily account for language as a power resource either.

Both the literature and my data suggest that both the consumption and production of language (e.g., “professional speak” as opposed to “prison talk”) are important for (re)integration. More importantly, beyond crystalizing notions of capital, an application of Bourdieu’s theory of capital is *always* equipped with a simultaneous discussion of field and habitus, which provide a balance between objectivism and subjectivism.

A theory of capital erosion must necessarily do the same. In the case of field, this requires an identification of the differential distribution of the species of capital within arenas of varying scope. In turn, an identification of capital unveils the structure of fields. In other words, an exploration of capital erosion requires a consideration of field, and of course the field of power, because the relationship between capital and field – or, to put it another way, between power and structure – is fundamentally interdependent.

In the case of habitus, a theory of capital erosion requires a necessary critique of rational action. Such a theory must run parallel to Bourdieu’s general claim that the social world is internalized and that the use of capital is not only dependent on position, but also on disposition. Action, as it pertains to capital expenditure or investment, is dependent on a “feel for the game,” a habitus. In turn, the development and conditioning of one’s habitus is dependent on capital, as the formulation of dispositions are determined in part by field position, which is of course structured by a differential distribution of capital. Thus, I am not arguing for an isolated theory of capital erosion, but instead for a more comprehensive Bourdieuan-inspired analysis of how

imprisonment reflects and exacerbates inequality. In advancing this intellectual project, I also argue for a theory of habitus adjustment.

*Towards a Theory of Habitus Adjustment:*

Bourdieu's notion of habitus is also a practical tool to use when exploring issues of imprisonment and release. Similar to the above thinking exercise, I argue for a theory of habitus adjustment in which the prison is again considered an independent variable. However, in this case, habitus is the dependent variable. Although my data is more limited with regard to habitus than it is for capital, both the literature and my findings *suggest* that the prison can and does adjust habitus.

It is important to reiterate that change in habitus is slow. In the case of imprisonment in America, where the average amount of time spent in prison is roughly two-and-a-half years and the space behind prison walls are for adults only (or at least those defined as adults by the court), substantial change in habitus may appear unlikely. In other words, the bodies who enter prison are already conditioned by years of a class-based family and neighborhood socialization. Nevertheless, there are unique conditions of imprisonment, such as the extreme deprivations of liberty and privacy and the reality that prisoners are embedded in two structural orders (i.e., the code of the prison and the code of prisoners) that likely impact the effects of habitus (i.e., thoughts, perception, and action).

In Chapter III, I borrow from the literature on "prisonization" and the "psychological impacts of imprisonment" (e.g., Haney 2003) to emphasize how imprisonment can and does influence internalized constructions. And, while participants



of my study do not state that they themselves have been institutionalized, several claim they know of other prisoners who are dependent on the conditions of the prison. More importantly, a few respondents highlight how imprisonment has nevertheless “changed” them, such as by desensitizing them to violence or altering their decision making capabilities. Together, the literature on the micro implications of the prison and my data suggest that the prison can adjust habitus.

Irwin (1970), along with my respondents’ perceptions of release, suggest that the thoughts, actions, and perceptions molded by the prison may restrict (re)integration. A released prisoner will likely feel out of place in the most mundane free world activities that oppose containment and coercion and promote liberty and privacy. Day to day activities of the free world, such as traveling in a car or choosing from a variety of meal options, are not favorable to prisoner dispositions. In the case of a released prisoner seeking employment or permanent housing, he may struggle with self-presentation, even when he consciously aims to “act professional.” It may be difficult, if not impossible, for a released prisoner to submerge those dispositions he embodied in prison when interacting with potential employers and landlords. Without conscious recognition, he may fail to keep eye contact, speak in an articulate fashion, or hold his posture straight. He may experience hysteresis.

The hysteresis effect, for Bourdieu (1977:83), refers to a “lag between opportunities and the dispositions to grasp them.” Such a phenomenon occurs when an individual’s systems of dispositions do not match the changing conditions of his environment. In the case of the exiting prisoner, who leaves with embodied experiences

of imprisonment, he will likely find his job and housing search to be overwhelming. His hysteresis, the outcome of a prison-adjusted habitus exposed to the “streets,” to use Irwin’s (1970) words, may reduce his chances of going straight.

A theory of habitus adjustment should not run separately, or even parallel to a theory of capital erosion; it should instead run in conjunction. Access to the straight life, when conceptualizing an honest income and permanent housing as perquisites and markers, requires more than simply capital. Such access is also dependent on a “feel for the game.” In other words, a released prisoner needs to know how to play his capital. He may also be deterred from using what little levels of capital he has following erosion if he experiences hysteresis. His bodily senses may consciously and subconsciously pressure him to occupy spaces of familiarity. This may barricade him from going straight.

*A Call for Theory Testing:*

I end this section by advocating for theory testing and refining. In the first chapter I frame my research as inductive and what Ragin (1994) refers to as a form of theory advancement. And, while this thesis is simply a drop in the bucket to advance Bourdieu’s thinking tools in the interdisciplinary topic of imprisonment and release, several of my emergent claims are worthy of testing and refining.

As a counter to theory advancement, theory testing is deductive (Ragin 1994:45-6). For Ragin (1994:134), using quantitative methods to study covariation is the best strategy for theory testing. In other words, theory testing is more objectivist. My elementary claims of capital erosion and habitus adjustment are presently inductive. An

obvious next step is to develop hypotheses from my claims and test them analyzing data of breadth via statistical procedures, which are stronger assessments of causality. The ideas I have presented throughout this thesis regarding capital erosion and habitus adjustment are burgeoning. Further theoretical and empirical investigation is warranted.

### **In Perspective: Facts and Figures From the Other Side of the Gate**

Early in Chapter V I took the pulse of hyperincarceration in Oregon by reviewing the social profile of ODOC prisoners. Here, I embark on a comparable journey by briefly covering release trends in Oregon. I explore an obvious concluding question – What can the soon-to-be-released prisoners at CRCI expect? – by inquiring into recidivism, housing, and employment rates for released prisoners in Oregon and beyond.

#### *Recidivism:*

According to an official report by ODOC (2010b), of those Oregon prisoners released on parole for the first time in the first of two release cohorts in 2007 (approximately 3,000), roughly 12 percent were reconvicted of a felony within a year. At 24 months, this portion grew to over a fifth (21 percent), and at three years it expanded to over a quarter (27 percent) (ODOC 2010b). These numbers are higher for new black parolees during that same time period, with 16 percent reconvicted within 12 months, 26 percent within 24 months, and 35 percent within three years, and lower for new white parolees, with 12 percent reconvicted within a year, 21 percent within two years, and 28 percent within three years (ODOC 2010b).

It is relatively difficult to put these figures in national perspective, as the canonical assessment of post-prison recidivism (i.e., Langan and Levin 2002) employs a different population parameter. ODOC measures the reconviction of a population that is more limited than Langan and Levin (2002). The former's population includes new Oregon parolees and excludes those released from prison following a parole revocation (ODOC 2010b). Langan and Levin (2002) do not limit their population to new parolees, nor do they exclude those being released following a revocation from parole. However, each operationalize recidivism by reconviction and provide measurements at 12, 24, and 36 months after release.<sup>47</sup> A mild comparison can thus be made.

At the national level, an estimated 22 percent of released prisoners in 1994 were reconvicted within 12 months, over a third (36 percent) were reconvicted within 24 months, and almost half (47 percent) were reconvicted within 36 months (Langan and Levin 2002). These percentages are higher than ODOC measurements of Oregon prisoners released on parole in the first release cohort of 1994, with 13 percent reconvicted within 12 months, 23 percent reconvicted within 24 months, and 31 percent reconvicted within 36 months (ODOC 2010b). Table 6 summarizes these statistics.

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<sup>47</sup> Langan and Levin (2002) provide three operationalizations for post-prison recidivism: rearrest, reconviction, and resentence. I only focus on their findings regarding reconviction, as reconviction is the primary recidivism definition employed by ODOC.

**Table 6: Post-Prison Reconviction (%)**

|                   | ODOC 2007* | ODOC 1994* | Langan and Levin's<br>1994 Sample |
|-------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------------------|
| Recon. 12 Months: | 12.1       | 13.4       | 21.5                              |
| Recon. 24 Months: | 20.7       | 22.9       | 36.4                              |
| Recon. 36 Months: | 27.1       | 30.6       | 46.9                              |

Source: ODOC 2010b and Langan and Levin 2002.

\*Pulled from first release cohort for the year.

Overall, when operationalizing post-prison recidivism by reconviction, Oregon appears to have a lower recidivism rate than the nation as a whole. Nevertheless, a significant number of prisoners released from ODOC custody reasonably “fail,” as nearly 31 percent in 1994 and 27 percent in 2007 face new felony convictions within three years. Recidivism rates, however, are insufficient indicators post-prison (re)integration. It is possible that that even though an estimated two-thirds of released prisoners in Oregon do not face reconviction in 36 months, many, if not most, may still find themselves marginalized and disintegrated from the general population. They may not have permanent housing or an honest income.

#### *Housing and Employment:*

In 2007 the Oregon Governor’s Office developed the “Governor’s Reentry Council” (REC). Among one of its many strategies to increase successful transition for released prisoners under ODOC custody, the council also posts quarterly meeting minutes online for the public to review. In the second quarter 2010, the council reviewed an internal progress report.

While this report provides somewhat vague analyses that are challenging for an external party to review, a few points regarding housing and employment provide insight into prison release in Oregon. First, excluding hotels and missions, over 50 percent of released prisoners in 2008 and 2009 have “valid addresses” (REC 2010). The report is unclear on where this data is drawn from, and begs several questions. What constitutes an “invalid address”? Are those released with “valid addresses” actually living in those locations following their exit from prison, or is this information simply the addresses provided by prisoners at the point of release? Also, what portion of those addresses are permanent living arrangements versus those that are temporary? Missions and hotels are excluded, but what about halfway houses and other forms of transitional housing?

Fortunately, the report provides somewhat greater detail regarding employment. Of those Oregon prisoners released on supervision in 2008, only 15 percent held some form of employment at six months after release (REC 2010). And, while the report does not list such figures for 2009 or 2010, the five most popular jobs attained by 2009 released prisoners are listed and include: support services (clerical, landscaping, temp jobs, janitorial, trash disposal), manufacturing, construction, hotel and food services, and retail (REC 2010).

#### *The Success of Road to Success:*

Although my thesis is by no means a form of program evaluation, I find it appropriate to briefly assess the value of the program a majority of my interview and observation data are drawn. According to the same REC meeting minutes, in 2008

roughly 15 percent of released prisoners in Oregon held employment six following release, in comparison to 43 percent of those who completed the Road to Success employment class before their exit (REC 2010).<sup>48</sup> This correlation may be spurious, because there is a strong potential for a selection bias. Those prisoners who choose to volunteer for the employment class may be more ambitious job-seekers than the general ODOC release population.

Program effectiveness is near impossible to measure with either the above statistics or my findings, because causality cannot be reasonably assessed. However, this should not undermine the potential value of the Road to Success program. All interview respondents claim the program is at least valuable for some soon-to-be-released prisoners, and my observations suggest that program participants absorb and retain information from multiple lessons.

#### *The Murky Outs:*

While some of above facts and figures regarding recidivism, housing, and employment are more or less beyond the scope of my research questions, they still provide some insight into what the men I interacted with can expect on the other side of the gate. However, this information is very limited. Recidivism (when operationalized by reconviction) appears to be lower in Oregon than the nation as a whole, but such a comparison must be approached cautiously as ODOC (2010b) and Langan and Levin (2002) employ mildly different population parameters. And, even if recidivism is lower in

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<sup>48</sup> The report does not provide any information to suggest that these statistics refer to those prisoners who completed the Road to Success employment class at CRCI or at all ODOC prisons that offer the course.

Oregon, it still exists. Over a quarter of new parolees who were released from prison in 2007 faced new convictions in three years (ODOC 2010b). Housing and employment rates for recently released prisoners in Oregon are difficult to assess, but access to the straight life appears to be major challenges for ex-cons in Oregon as nearly half are released without “valid addresses” and roughly 85 percent do not hold employment six months following their exit (REC 2010). Lastly, public information regarding the effectiveness of the Road to Success classes is vague. This may be because the program is roughly two years old and there has been little opportunity for ODOC to assess and report on the program’s potential impact on successful (re)integration. Overall, there is limited information to suggest whether or not the men I spoke to can or will access those markers and perquisites of the straight life.

### **The Marketplace of (Re)Integration and My Final Hypothesis**

In closing this chapter and thesis I depart by outlining a final theoretical frame and testable statement. As I have argued throughout these six chapters, Bourdieu’s thinking tools are useful when exploring hyperincarceration and release. In using these tools to explore my data and the existing literature, I am motivated to describe two processes, capital erosion and habitus adjustment. Erosion and adjustment are problematic because they exacerbate inequality and promote disintegration. They hinder access to the straight life. This hindrance is crystalized when considering an honest income and permanent housing as critical for successful (re)integration.



Here it is helpful to compare, metaphorically, the period immediately following release to a marketplace. In this marketplace, those ex-prisoners who desire and strive for the straight life must purchase an honest income and permanent housing. Acquiring these markers and prerequisites entails an expenditure of capital, be it the exchange of economic capital to cover a rental deposit or the use of cultural capital in the form of bureaucratic know-how to professionally complete a job application. These purchases may require an actor to first purchase other merchandise (e.g., job interview clothes) or exchange the species of capital, such as by tapping into one's social network for an informal loan.

This marketplace of (re)integration should not be defined as a field, but instead as buffer zone between the life of incarcerate and the straight life. In this buffer zone, recently crowned ex-cons attempt to access specific fields, such as the labor market field or the field of higher education, and reposition themselves in relation to the bureaucratic field (e.g., successfully complete parole). In terms of accessing or re-accessing those fields that will generate an honest income, such as the job market or college, these men pragmatically aim to enter lower tiers of these fields (e.g., entry level jobs or community college admission). The buffer zone is therefore equipped with a series of capital admission fees.

Within this frame, parole is more or less a regulatory agency that oversees the behavior of market actors. Conceptually, this agency has the potential to aid successful market behavior by assisting ex-cons with accessing and navigating what Petersilia (2003:89) calls "brokering services," and what Irwin (1970:126) titles "buffer agencies"

(e.g., post-prison transition services, such as halfway houses). Within this model, the parole officer works on behalf of the market interests of the ex-con by aiding those necessary purchases for the straight life. However, according to Petersilia (2003), parole has shifted away from its rehabilitative goals and practices and towards more surveillance and punitive tactics. Multiple variables have motivated this shift (see Petersilia 2003 for more detail), but what is important in terms of a post-prison marketplace is that the punitive and surveillance bias of modern parole works against the market interests of ex-cons who desire and strive for the straight life.

This metaphorical marketplace should not be confused as an arena of rational choice. Successful purchasing and bartering strategies within real and metaphorical markets require a feel for the game, a habitus. An ex-prisoner's dispositions, molded primarily by the material and nonmaterial conditions of his childhood, but also adjusted somewhat or greatly by the conditions of the prison, influence his strategies. Internalized boundaries may prevent favorable market behavior. An ex-prisoner may feel out of touch with the free world and with the processes and rituals of securing permanent housing and an honest income. His habitus may consciously and unconsciously deter him from entering spaces unfamiliar or engaging in behaviors unpracticed. Thus, in addition to one's worth (i.e., capital) and the structural conditions of the market (e.g., parole as a regulatory agency and the availability and price of merchandise), successful exchanges are also dependent on the embodiment of an actor's thoughts, perceptions, and actions.

This leads me to posit one final hypothesis to be tested and advanced in future research: Those prisoners released with greater capital worth (both in terms of volume and weight) and/or the least prison-adjusted habituses are more likely to access the straight life (i.e., by securing permanent housing and an honest income) than those prisoners released with less capital worth and/or greater prison-adjusted habituses. My expectation is simple. If imprisonment exacerbates inequality and disintegration via erosion and adjustment, than those who suffer the least from these processes are more likely to go straight.

The above hypothesis begs empirical exploration of people on the other side of the gate. While an examination of soon-to-be-released prisoners is important, it only tells half of the prison release story. I, and researchers alike, should next explore the fallout of erosion and adjustment.

In summary, this thesis, as both an exercise in theory and research, posits four primary claims. Firstly, imprisonment erodes capital, and secondly, imprisonment adjusts habitus. With respect to how soon-to-be-released prisoners understand their upcoming exit, I also defend a third claim that many prisoners want to adopt the straight life and that many see permanent housing and an honest income as markers and perquisites of that lifestyle. Lastly, with respect to how soon-to-be-released prisoners prepare for their upcoming exit, I argue that many (not all, but many) take proactive steps from behind bars to combat erosion and increase their chances of going straight.

The prisoner approaching release, who almost always hails from the depths of an economic and moral order, prepares for movement in the bureaucratic field. With a fairly optimistic attitude, coupled with a pragmatic vision of the future, he usually hopes to go straight. This often entails a desire to access or re-access the wage-labor sector of the economy and to secure safe and stable shelter. However, literature and data suggest he will walk out of the gate with diminished capital and a maladjusted sense of place, potentially barricading (re)integration. He is pushed further into the pit of a material and symbolic hierarchy.

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**Appendix A**  
Six Month Assessment Form

**CRCI – INDIVIDUAL INMATE ASSESSMENT**

**NAME:**

**SID#:**

**County of Release:**

**REL/DATE:**

**UNIT/CELL:**

| <b>ROAD TO SUCCESS<br/>CLASSES</b>   | <i>What<br/>I<br/>Need</i> | <i>Completed</i> | <b>INDIVIDUAL TRANSITIONAL<br/>NEEDS<br/>(Stuff to do during open office)</b> | <i>What<br/>I<br/>Need</i> |
|--|----------------------------|------------------|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Employment</b> (6 - 2 hr classes)   |                            |                  | Child Support   |                            |
| <b>Your Family/Your Release &amp; Your Community</b><br>(1 – 2 hr class)           |                            |                  | Parole Officer: Reach – In<br>(non-tri county)                                |                            |
| <b>Working Effectively with Your P.O.</b><br>(1 – 2 hr class)                      |                            |                  | DHS (food stamps)   |                            |
| <b>Budget and Finance</b> (1 – 4 1/2 hr class)                                     |                            |                  | Housing Options   |                            |
| <b>Housing</b> (12 hr class)<br>(Budgeting & Finance Class Required)               |                            |                  | Community Specific Resources<br>(mentor, sponsor, pastor, Etc.)               |                            |
| <b>Flagging Class</b><br>(Employment Class Required) <b>(Cost is \$80)</b>         |                            |                  | Project Clean Slate<br>(Multnomah County only)                                |                            |
| <b>Food Handlers Card</b><br>(Multnomah County Only) <b>(Cost is \$10 or less)</b> |                            |                  | Employment Search   |                            |
|  |                            |                  | DMV Inquiry   |                            |
| <b>CLASSES/ GROUPS</b>   |                            |                  | Letter of Incarceration   |                            |
| Community Partners Reinvestment Project  |                            |                  | Credit Check  |                            |
| Veterans Benefits  |                            |                  | Medical Health /Rx Benefits   |                            |
| AAP  |                            |                  | Other:  |                            |
| Going Home   |                            |                  |   |                            |
| Home for Good  |                            |                  | <b>TREATMENTS</b>   |                            |
| Phoenix Rising   |                            |                  | A&D meetings  |                            |
| OCE/ WBE/ DOC  |                            |                  | HIV/ Hepatitis Testing<br>(Kyte Medical)                                      |                            |
| Apprenticeship programs  |                            |                  | Mental Health Assistance/ SSI<br>(Kyte BHS)                                   |                            |
| Threshold  |                            |                  |   |                            |
| Dave Ramsey's - Financial Peace University   |                            |                  |   |                            |

**I plan to participate in services: YES / NO (circle one)**

**NOTE:** Once accepting a program it will be your responsibility to complete it; if you later find that you no longer desire the class, it is your responsibility to notify transitional staff.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

For Staff Use Only: Entered \_\_\_\_\_ Entered by \_\_\_\_\_ Updated \_\_\_\_\_ Updated by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Re-Assessed

# Be Part of An Important Study

## **Information about the Study:**

A researcher from Portland State University is doing a study. This study is about your thoughts on prison and being released from prison. The researcher wants to learn about your thoughts and feeling in finding a place to live, a place to work, and your general understanding of life outside of prison. The researcher also wants to learn about life inside of prison.

## **What you would have to do:**

You will complete a 30 to 40 minute interview. The interview will mainly ask you about prison life, your upcoming release from prison, and your thoughts on transitional services.

## **How to Sign Up:**

List your name on the signup sheet being passed around.

## **Any Questions?**

If you have concerns about your participation in this study or about your rights as a research subject, you can write to the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, PO Box 751, Portland State University, Portland, OR. 97207 or call them at (503) 725-4288. If you have questions about the study itself, contact Josh Seim at the Department of Sociology P.O. Box 751, Portland, OR 97201, (509) 499-1047.



**Appendix C**  
Interview Signup Sheet

**SIGN ME UP!**

"I would like to participate in Mr. Seim's interview study about imprisonment and release. I give him permission to schedule an interview meeting with me."

"By signing this form I know that I am not guaranteed an interview. I also know that I have the right to choose not to participate in this study at anytime. I have the right to cancel the interview."

Please **print** your first and last name:

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## Appendix D

### Interview Protocol

Please note: Bold text indicates the primary questions of the interview. The remaining text is more of a script of what I said to motivate the conversation and bridge questions. Probes were potential, meaning that they were not all addressed in every interview. Each was addressed at least once or twice throughout the entirety of interview data collection.

As I stated earlier (referring to the consent form), the purpose of the study is to understand your expectations and plans after release. However, before we get into details about adjusting to life outside of prison, I need to better understand the world inside of prison. I could read a book about prison, but really nobody knows the world of incarceration better than people who are incarcerated. I'd like it if you could briefly teach me about life inside prison.

**1. What would you say is key to surviving inside prison?**

a. Potential probes:

- i. What would you say are some of the basic rules of prison?
- ii. How important is money inside prison?
- iii. How important is trading things such as food and other inside prison?
- iv. How important are social bonds inside of prison? For example, friendships and acquaintances?
- v. How important is it to maintain relationships with friends and family on the outside while you're incarcerated?
- vi. How do you act around other prisoners?

Now we're going to switch gears a bit and talk about your upcoming release. I want to learn about your understandings of release and your expectations and plans once you are released or paroled.

**2. What would you say is key to surviving outside of prison?**

a. Potential probes:

- i. What would you say are some of the general rules for successfully adjusting to life outside of prison?
- ii. How important is money outside of prison?
- iii. How important are social bonds outside of prison? For example, family friendships?
- iv. Once you are released how important is it to maintain relationships with your friends and acquaintances inside prison?
- v. What types of things and objects are valued outside of prison?
- vi. How should a recently released prisoner generally act around other people?

**3. What are some of the biggest challenges you think you will face once you are released from prison?**

a. Potential probes:

- i. What about simple day-to-day interactions with other people?
- ii. Interactions with family and friends?

- iii. Employment?
  - iv. Housing?
- 4. What do you think your experience will be like finding a job once you leave this place?**
  - a. Potential probes:
    - i. In what ways do you think your criminal record will influence the jobs you can get?
    - ii. Do you think you learned any skills inside prison that will help you find a job once you are released?
    - iii. How comfortable do you feel to fill out a job application and complete a job interview?
    - iv. What role do you think family and friends play in helping you find a job?
    - v. Do you think you will find a job that will pay you what you consider to be a “comfortable” wage?
- 5. What do you think your experience will be like finding place to live?**
  - a. Potential probes:
    - i. In what ways do you think your criminal record will influence the places you can live?
    - ii. Do you think you learned any skills inside prison that will help you find a place to live once you are released?
    - iii. How comfortable do you feel to fill out an application to rent an apartment?
    - iv. What role do you think family and friends will play in helping you find a job?
    - v. Do you expect to find a “comfortable” place to live?
- 6. Transitional Services questions. Please note: this section of the interview will vary between those participants who opt-in and those who opt-out**
  - a. (Opt-in)
    - i. **How would you describe transitional services to somebody unfamiliar with these programs?**
    - ii. **Why do you participate in these programs?**
    - iii. **Do you think these programs are valuable? Explain.**
  - b. (Opt-out)
    - i. **How would you describe transitional services to somebody unfamiliar with these programs?**
    - ii. **Why don't you participate in these programs?**
    - iii. **Do you think these programs are valuable? Explain.**
- 7. After discussing the issues of housing and employment upon release, what would you say are the essential skills you need for success outside of prison? In other words, what do you think you need to know and be able to do in order to succeed and keep out of trouble?**
  - a. Potential probes:
    - i. What about specific life skills such as reading and writing?
    - ii. What about the ability to use new technology? For example, modern computers and cell phones?

## Appendix E

### Interview Consent Form

#### BE PART OF AN IMPORTANT STUDY

You are invited to participate in research study conducted by Joshua Seim, a student researcher from the Department of Sociology at Portland State University. This study is about your thoughts on prison and being released from prison. The researcher wants to learn about your thoughts and feelings in finding a place to live, a place to work, and your general understanding of life outside of prison. The researcher also wants to learn about how you understand life inside of prison. The researcher also wants to ask you questions about transitional services.

This project is for the researcher's master's thesis at Portland State University. The researcher is here as a student and is not an employee of the Oregon Department of Corrections.

#### What Will I Have To Do?

You will take a 30 to 40 minute interview. You will be asked about these topics:

- Your age.
- Your race.
- Your thoughts on living in prison.
- Your thoughts on being released from prison.
- Your thoughts on transitional service programs here at Columbia River.

#### Why Should I Complete the Interview?

- You will be helping people understand prison and prison release better. This may help people to figure out ways to make prison release easier on inmates.
- Doing this interview might help you too. It might help you to think about these things and focus on parts of your life that you might want to change.

#### Are There Any Risks?

- You might feel sad because of some of the questions in the interview.
- As a prisoner, you don't have a lot of privacy. While in a locked setting, the researcher may not have complete control over who hears or sees information about you. There is a risk that authorities might overhear or take answers about you from the researcher, and that your answers could be used against you. The researcher will make every effort to protect your privacy.
- You don't have to answer questions that could get you into trouble.
- You also don't have to tell anyone that you participated in this study unless you want to.
- If you start the interview and then change your mind, you can stop.
- While you participate in the study, all rules and regulations of ODOC still count. For example, if you behave badly when you are participating in the interview, you could get in trouble and that might have an effect on your parole.
- **You won't get in trouble with ODOC or anyone else if you participate in this interview or if you don't participate in this interview.**
- **This study is for research only. It won't change your sentence in any way. It won't change your parole.**

## Appendix E Continued

### What Are You Doing To Protect Me?

- ➔ The researcher won't tell *anyone* if you participate in an interview or not. He won't tell the prison. He won't tell your parole officer. He won't tell your counselor. He won't tell the police.
- ➔ The researcher also won't tell anyone about what you said in the interview.
- ➔ Your name, which the researcher needs so he can keep track of who took part in the study, will be kept in a locked office.
- ➔ Your answers will be typed and identified by a secret number, not your name, so that no one can match up your name with your answers except for the researcher.
- ➔ All reports and written work that comes from this project will not use your real name. A fake name that is unidentifiable to you may be used.
- ➔ When the researcher writes or talks about what he learned in this study, he will leave things out so no one will be able to tell who we are talking about.

### Any Questions?

If you have concerns about your participation in this study or about your rights as a research subject, you can write to the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, PO Box 751, Portland State University, Portland, OR. 97207 or call them at (503) 725-4288. If you have questions about the study itself, contact Josh Seim at the Department of Sociology P.O. Box 751, Portland, OR 97201, (509) 499-1047.

By signing this paper you are saying that you have read and understand the information above and agree to take part in this study. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form for your own records.

### May the researcher contact you in the next five years to invite you to participate in a follow up study?

This follow up study would ask you about your experiences in finding a job, a place to live, and adjusting to the world outside of prison. This future study would likely involve an interview or a survey.

☐ Yes ☐ No (If "Yes," please provide contact information on the next page of this document). By checking "Yes" you are not signing up for a future interview or survey. You are just allowing the researcher to ask you to take part in a future study.

Name: (Print) \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E Continued

**Primary Contact:**

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Secondary Contact** (Please feel free to list contact information for as many friends as you want):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

### Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Interview Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre Interview Questionnaire

1. When do you expect to be released or paroled?

Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

2. How old are you?

\_\_\_\_\_ (years old)

3. What race do you consider yourself?

☐ White/Caucasian ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native

☐ Black/African American ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander

☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Is this your first time in prison?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. What was your main job/career **before** you came to prison?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Where did you mainly live **before** you came to prison?

☐ By myself

☐ With a relative

☐ With a friend

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Where do you **plan** to live once you are released?

☐ By myself

☐ With a relative

☐ With a friend

☐ Halfway House

☐ I don't know

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Where do you **plan** to work once you are released?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix G**  
Observation Log

| <b>Activity/Event</b>    | <b>Date*</b> | <b>Time*</b> | <b>Duration</b> |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| General Visits/Tours**   | N/A          | N/A          | Approx: 5 hr    |
| Guest Speaker One        | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 1 hr, 30 min    |
| Employment Class 1 of 6  | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 2 hr, 15 min    |
| PO Class                 | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 2 hr, 30 min    |
| Employment Class 2 of 6  | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 2 hr, 30 min    |
| Housing Class 1 of 2     | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 6 hr            |
| Employment Class 3 of 6  | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 2 hr            |
| Guest Speaker Two        | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 2 hr, 15 min    |
| Employment Class 4 of 6  | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 2 hr, 30 min    |
| Employment Class 5 of 6  | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 2 hr            |
| Family Class             | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 2 hr, 30 min    |
| Six Month Assessment     | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 30 min          |
| Opt-Out Recruitment One  | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 30 min          |
| Employment Class 6 of 6  | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 2 hr, 30 min    |
| Housing Class 2 of 2     | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 5 hr            |
| Budget and Finance Class | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 5 hr, 30 min    |
| Opt-Out Recruitment Two  | 00/00/2010   | 00:00-00:00  | 1 hr            |

\*Date and time of observations are not included in this version of the observation log for reasons of confidentiality.

\*\*Refers to observations taken during the sampling stage, before I began logging observation hours.

| <b>Approximate Amount, Visits, and Range</b> |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Approximate Amount of Observation            | 44 hours and 30 minutes |
| Approximate Number of Visits                 | 20                      |
| Approximate Time Range                       | 8:00am to 3:00pm        |



**Appendix H**  
Road to Success Certificate



## **Appendix I**

### Codebook One: Preliminary Codes

#### **Field:**

Data relevant to rules, structure, opportunity, and social space will be categorized under the broad code “field.” Responses that describe navigation pathways of power inside and outside of prison are of particular interest.\*

#### **Capital:**

“Capital” is a code that will include data relevant to how capital possession influences a players’ position and movement opportunities in a the U.S. class hierarchy. This code will house sub-codes relevant to the processes of erosion and investment.

#### **Habitus:**

Habitus is a preliminary category that will include data relevant to players’ “feel for the game” and “sense of place.” Data within this category will most likely manifest through discussions and observations of the “effects” of habitus (i.e., thoughts, perceptions, and actions).

\*In the proposal stage I attempted to conceptualize an “incarceration field” and a “post-incarceration” field. However, after discussing these conceptualizations with Bourdieuan scholars, particularly Wacquant, I decided to drop this distinction and these early conceptualizations, and subsequently their sub-codes (not listed). Knowing that field was a necessary component of Bourdieu’s theory, I turned to Wacquant’s writings to identify the prison in the bureaucratic field (chapter two) and the literature on imprisonment, release, and inequality (chapter three) to understand imprisonment and release practices in relation to the American field of power.

**Appendix J**  
Codebook Two: Initial Codes

1. Us Vs. Them Vs. the Ethnographer
2. Prison as Controlling / Scheduling
3. Privacy Gone
4. Freedom Gone
5. Formal Prisoner Economy
6. Prison Labor/Job
7. Informal Prisoner Economy
8. Working Out Behind Bars
9. Stay Busy / Keeping Busy / Kill Time
10. Prison Lingo / Prisoner Slang
11. Respect in Prison
12. Mind Your Own Business / Keep Your Mouth Shut
13. Avoid Prison Politics
14. Us Vs. Them (Prisoners Vs. Staff/Guards)
15. Don't Snitch
16. Do Your Own Time
17. Be Honest in Prison / Be Authentic / Don't Lie
18. No Secrecy in Prison
19. Sex Offenders / Bad Paperwork / Paying Rent
20. Other Prisons Harder/More Violent
21. Other Prisons Less Drama
22. Other Prisons Different Demographics
23. Biggest Release Challenge is Employment
24. Biggest Release Challenge is Housing
25. Shoes in Prison
26. Gangs
27. Clique Up and Cars
28. Friends in Prison
29. Family and Incarceration / Outside Friends and Incarceration
30. Employers are Economic / Employers Care About Making Money
31. The Job Hunt
32. Importance of Having a Job / Job in General
33. The Housing Hunt
34. Importance of Having Shelter / Housing in General
35. Formal Economy on the Outs
36. Traits of a Good Employee / How to Work / Work Ethic
37. Family, Imprisonment, and Stress
38. Job Interview
39. Informal Economy on the Outs
40. Criminal Record/History in General
41. Criminal Record/History and the Labor Market
42. Criminal Record/History and the Housing Market
43. Combating Criminal Record with Classes and Certificates in Labor Market
44. Combating Criminal Record with Classes and Certificates in Housing Market
45. Penitentiary-Offered Certificates General

46. Pro Social References: Professional and Personal
47. Job Resume
48. Stress of Release
49. Excitement of Release
50. Challenges of Release
51. Individual/Agency: Its All About How You Apply Yourself
52. Professions of Prisoners
53. Family, Friends, and Release / General Social Support on the Outs
54. Poor Family Situation on the Outs
55. Knowing the Resources Available to You on the Outs
56. Completing Paperwork: Job Apps, Rental Agreements, Bank Paperwork, etc.
57. Traits of a Good Tenant / How to Rent
58. Savings
59. Race Relations Inside Prison
60. Defining Transitional Services
61. Why Opt-In?
62. Why not do Specific Classes?
63. Why Opt Out?
64. Road to Success Classes Valuable for Me
65. Road to Success Classes Valuable for Others, Not Me
66. Road to Success Classes Not Valuable
67. Housing Class
68. Employment Class
69. Budget and Finance Class
70. PO Class
71. Family Class
72. Literacy and Prisoners
73. Technology and Release
74. Money on The Outs / Money and Release
75. Finding New Friends at Release / Avoiding Old Friends
76. Already Got a Job at Release
77. General Notes on Road to Success Program
78. Staff Don't Care
79. School/Education Sucks
80. School/Education is Cool
81. Loosing Pro-Social Skills While in Prison
82. Gaining Pro-Social Skills While in Prison
83. Loosing Job Skills While in Prison
84. Gaining Job Skills While in Prison
85. Stigma of Felony / Stigma of Prison
86. Manhood / Masculinity
87. Parole / Post-Prison Supervision
88. Prisons Don't Rehabilitate
89. Spirituality / Religiosity
90. Plan on Living in Transitional Housing?
91. Lifestyle on the Outs
92. Prison as Disintegrative / Promoting Criminality
93. Prison Industrial Complex / Prison as Business
94. Plans on Attending School

95. Violence and Fighting in Prison
96. Readapting to Outs / Culture Shock / PTSD / Disorientation
97. Diversity in Prison / Learn to Live with Different People / Patience
98. Staying Clean/Sober
99. Drugs and Alcohol on the Outs
100. Drug and Alcohol Support Groups on Outs / A.A./N.A.
101. Prison Can Change You / Prisonization / Institutionalization
102. Inter-Prison Prisoner Network
103. Live with Family on the Outs
104. Opt-Out Using Other Trans Services
105. Bunk as Sacred Space
106. Prisoners are Dumb/Idiots/Morons
107. Unit 7 Has a Culture Different from Other Units
108. Punks / Bitches
109. Fish / New Prisoners
110. Chicken Hawks
111. Don't Trust Prisoners

## **Appendix K**

### Codebook Three: Focused Codes

Please Note: The following codes are not mutually exclusive. During focused coding, some data was coded under two or more codes. Also, even though I constructed separate categories of the species of capital and habitus, I still look to the other coding categories for theoretical application. For example, codes regarding the honest income hunt and the housing hunt shed light on the use, investment, and erosion of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital.

1. Approaching Release
  - a. Stress of Release
  - b. Excitement of Release
  - c. Challenges of Release
2. Honest Income Hunt
  - a. Biggest Release Challenge is Employment
  - b. The Job Hunt
  - c. Formal Economy on the Outs
  - d. Traits of a Good Employee / How to Work / Work Ethic
  - e. The Job Hunt
  - f. Importance of Having a Job / Job in General
  - g. Job Interview
  - h. Employers are Economic / Employers Care About Making Money
  - i. Criminal Record/History and the Labor Market
  - j. Combating Criminal Record with Classes and Certificates in Labor Market
  - k. Job Resume
  - l. Professions of Prisoners
  - m. Already Got a Job at Release
  - n. Plans on Attending School
  - o. Employment Class
3. The Housing Hunt
  - a. Biggest Release Challenge is Housing
  - b. The Housing Hunt
  - c. Importance of Having Shelter / Housing in General
  - d. Criminal Record/History and the Housing Market
  - e. Combating Criminal Record with Classes and Certificates in Housing Market
  - f. Traits of a Good Tenant / How to Rent
  - g. Housing Class
  - h. Live with Family on the Outs
4. Economic Capital
  - a. Savings
  - b. Money on The Outs / Money and Release
  - c. Formal Prisoner Economy
  - d. Prison Labor/Job
5. Social Capital
  - a. Family and Incarceration / Outside Friends and Incarceration
  - b. Family, Imprisonment, and Stress
  - c. Family, Friends, and Release / General Social Support on the Outs

- d. Poor Family Situation on the Outs
- e. Finding New Friends at Release / Avoiding Old Friends
- f. Drug and Alcohol Support Groups on Outs / A.A./N.A.
- 6. Cultural Capital
  - a. Knowing the Resources Available to You on the Outs
  - b. Completing Paperwork: Job Apps, Rental Agreements, Bank Paperwork, etc.
  - c. Literacy and Prisoners
  - d. Technology and Release
  - e. Loosing Pro-Social Skills While in Prison
  - f. Gaining Pro-Social Skills While in Prison
  - g. Loosing Job Skills While in Prison
  - h. Gaining Job Skills While in Prison
  - i. Budget and Finance Class
- 7. Symbolic Capital / Reputability
  - a. Criminal Record/History in General
  - b. Penitentiary-Offered Certificates General
  - c. Pro Social References: Professional and Personal
  - d. Stigma of Felony / Stigma of Prison
- 8. Habitus
  - a. Lifestyle on the Outs
  - b. Prisons Don't Rehabilitate
  - c. Prison as Disintegrative / Promoting Criminality
  - d. Violence and Fighting in Prison
  - e. Readapting to Outs / Culture Shock / PTSD / Disorientation
  - f. Diversity in Prison / Learn to Live with Different People / Patience
  - g. Prison Can Change You / Prisonization / Institutionalization